

/CHURCH AND STATE IN THE THOUGHT OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL/

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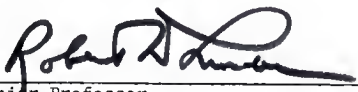
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INTRODUCTION

The establishment of constitutional provisions prohibiting the establishment of religion, and guaranteeing the free exercise thereof, was one of the most significant developments in early American history. These first amendment provisions also imply a concept which was, in the eighteenth century, a uniquely American contribution to political theory: the separation of church and state. The incorporation of these principles into the Constitution was not an overnight accomplishment, nor did the passage of the First Amendment mean that the controversies over matters of religious liberty and the relationship of church and state were over. But these developments, coupled with the pluralism that has been a characteristic of American life from the very beginning of colonization, have contributed greatly to the creation of a distinctively American religious tradition.

Many scholars have noted that two currents of thought were influential in bringing about the separation of church and state in America. On the one hand, there were the philosophical/political thinkers, who argued for such principles from an Enlightenment philosophical or "rights of man" political viewpoint. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison would be preeminent examples of these. On the other hand, there were those who argued for separation from a religious ideology--such as Roger Williams and Isaac Backus.

Although they use different terminology in describing the two groups, several prominent scholars have called attention to the contributions of both the religious thinkers and the philosophical/political thinkers to the development of the concept of church-state separation. In their classic work, Church and State in the United States, Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer note that it was "a combination of the ideals of the Enlightenment and the ideals of the Christian religion . . ." that led to this situation in America.¹ In another work, Pfeffer attributes the achievement of the separation of church and state to "an alliance between the theological orthodoxy of the Great Awakening, and the deism and skepticism of the enlightenment."² In a similar vein, Winthrop Hudson, one of the leading scholars in the field of American religious history, has noted that the various Protestant groups as well as the "religiously emancipated intellectuals," all played a part in the struggle for the separation of church and state.³ Sidney Mead, a noted authority on religion in America, has argued that rationalists on the one hand, and "sectarian-pietists" on the other hand, worked together to bring about religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Though these rationalists and religionists fundamentally disagreed in many other areas, Mead sees them united on this issue:

The struggles for religious freedom during the last quarter of the eighteenth century provided the kind of practical issue upon which the rationalist and sectarian-pietists could and did unite,

¹Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, Church and State in the United States, rev. one-vol. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 39.

²Leo Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 103.

³Winthrop Hudson, The Great Tradition of the American Churches (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), pp. 60-61.

in spite of underlying theological differences. The positive thrust for the separation of church and state and the making of all religious groups equal before the civil law came from the sectarian-pietists both within and without the right-wing churches, and from the rationalistic social and political leaders.⁴

Though both the religious leaders and the philosophical/political thinkers were agreed on the necessity of separation, they did not agree on why it was necessary. The Enlightenment thinkers did not believe in using the power of the state to coerce uniformity in areas that ought to be left to private judgment. Some also feared the power of the church, and argued for separation so that the church could not dominate the state.

The sectarian, non-conformist religious thinkers approached the problem from almost precisely the opposite position. To them, genuine religion was a matter between an individual and his God; the state had no right to interfere in such sacred matters. The church had to be kept separate from the state, not only to prevent this kind of coercion by the state, but also in order to keep the church pure and uncontaminated by contact with the world. Using Williams and Jefferson as examples of the two different positions, Perry Miller, the noted scholar of the Puritans and colonial America, made this comparison:

Williams was not, like Thomas Jefferson, a man to whom theology and divine grace had become stuff and nonsense; on the contrary he was pious with a fervor and passion that went beyond most of his contemporaries. So exalted was his conception of the spiritual life that he could not bear to have it polluted with earthly considerations. . . . Williams evolved from an orthodox Puritan into the champion of religious liberty because he came to see spiritual truth as so rare, so elevated, so supernal a loveliness that it could not be chained to a worldly establishment and a vested interest. He was a libertarian because he contemned the

⁴ Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 43. Though Mead may have found evidence of individuals within the "Right-wing," established churches who supported disestablishment and separation, generally the "left-wing" or nonconformists were much more likely to favor these ideas.

world, and he wanted to separate church and state so that the church would not be contaminated by the state; Thomas Jefferson loved the world and was dubious about the spirit, and he sought to separate church and state so that the state would not be contaminated by the church.⁵

These two currents of thought are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and no doubt the thinking of many individuals in America on church-state issues has been influenced by both. In this thesis, I intend to examine the thought of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), the major early leader of the Restoration Movement⁶ in America, in regards to the relationship of church and state. In particular, I will attempt to determine how Campbell relates to both the Enlightenment philosophical/political current of thought, and the religious current. Harold L. Lunger, a social ethicist at Brite Divinity School, and author of the most in-depth study of Campbell's political thought, has argued that Campbell represents a blending of these two currents of thought:

Students of American democracy distinguish two main streams of influence; one, primarily philosophical and political, the natural rights philosophy of John Locke mediated through Madison and Jefferson; the other, essentially religious, the left-wing Protestant tradition mediated through the Baptists under the leadership of Roger Williams. Locke was himself deeply influenced by this left-wing Protestant movement. In general, Campbell represents an uneasy blending of these two streams. His understanding of the nature of the church, the relations between church and state, and the principles of Christian conduct is essentially that of left-wing Protestantism, while his views of the nature of the

⁵ Perry Miller, "The Puritan State and Puritan Society," in his Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 146.

⁶ Though "Restoration" is a common motif throughout the history of Christianity, in this thesis the term "Restoration Movement" will refer only to the group that springs from the religious reform movement begun by Barton W. Stone, and by Thomas and Alexander Campbell in the early nineteenth century on the American frontier. Today this movement comprises three groups of churches: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), independent Christian churches, and Churches of Christ.

state and the forms and elements of government are those of Locke's natural rights philosophy. His political ethics represent a merging of these two principles.⁷

Sydney Ahlstrom, whose A Religious History of the American People⁸ has established itself as the standard work in its field, also recognized that Campbell was influenced both by Enlightenment thought and religious thought. Though he did not apply this to Campbell's church-state views specifically, he noted:

But Campbell was not only a restorationist and a legalist; he was also a fervent exponent of eighteenth century rationalism, a disciple of John Locke and the Scottish philosophers. Natural law concepts figured prominently in his ethical thought. An intellectualist bent determined his understanding of faith as the mind's assent to credible testimony. . . .⁹

In examining Campbell's thought on church-state issues, I intend to test Lunger's two-stream thesis, and attempt to answer the following questions: (1) To what extent was Campbell's thought on church-state issues influenced by what Lunger calls the "left-wing Protestant tradition"? (2) To what extent was Campbell's thought on these issues influenced by the philosophical/political tradition of the Enlightenment? (3) Can it really be said that Campbell represents a "blending" of these two streams? Why, or why not? (4) Can it be determined whether one of these streams dominates the other in Campbell's thinking and, if so, which one?

Although Lunger has provided an in-depth study of Campbell's political ethics, no scholar has focused specifically upon Campbell's

⁷Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), p. 13. This book is based on Lunger's 1949 Ph.D. dissertation at Yale University.

⁸New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

⁹Ibid., p. 449.

thought on the issue of the relationship of church and state. Campbell's ideas concerning church-state relations deserve study, primarily because of his role as the paramount leader of what became one of the major religious groups in the United States, and because of the way in which his thought presumably would have influenced the political activity of his many followers.

Campbell is an interesting and significant figure in his own right. He may well be one of the most neglected figures in American religious history. Coming to the United States from Ireland in 1809, he joined his father, Thomas Campbell, and others in promoting the Restoration Movement. The younger Campbell gained prominence through several widely publicized debates, his numerous preaching tours, and the periodicals he edited, The Christian Baptist (published 1823-1830) and the Millennial Harbinger (1830-1870). Though the movement he was associated with rejected hierarchical organization and thus had no official leaders above the level of the local congregation, nevertheless, Campbell was the most influential figure during the formative period of the Restoration Movement.

The religious movement which Campbell led was one of the fastest-growing groups in nineteenth-century America. Numbering less than 30,000 adherents in 1830, by 1860 there were over 200,000 "Disciples of Christ" or "Christians," as they called themselves,¹⁰ and they had become one of the most significant religious bodies on the frontier east of the

¹⁰ Even in the early days of the Restoration Movement, there was no consensus on a name for the churches associated with the movement. Though outsiders often called them "Campbellites" or "Stoneites," after prominent early leaders, people within the movement preferred "Disciples of Christ" or "Christians" as names for members, and local churches were often called simply Christian or Church of Christ.

Mississippi. Today, the three groups of churches that spring from the Restoration Movement have a combined membership in the neighborhood of four to five million.¹¹

The churches which trace their roots to the Restoration Movement thus represent a sizeable body, but beyond the factor of size, they are also significant as an indigenous American religious movement. Though they are not unique in this respect, there were several aspects of the theology and practice of the early movement that made it ideally suited to the circumstances on the American frontier: the democratic form of church government, the individualistic emphasis on freedom of opinion, and the plain theology, appealing and understandable to the common man. Early nineteenth-century America presented an atmosphere of religious ferment and restlessness, a time that was ripe for new beginnings. The Restoration Movement was only one of several groups that benefitted from this environment, but it is perhaps the most significant example of an indigenous American religious movement.¹²

¹¹On nineteenth-century figures for membership in the Disciples, see Leroy Garrett, The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981), p. 288; and Lester C. McAllister and William E. Tucker, Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), p. 154. For the current figures, compare the following: Constant H. Jacquet, Jr., ed., Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1983 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), pp. 35, 37, and 47; and Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations in the United States, 7th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), pp. 75, 78, and 100. The figures given in these two sources are similar, except that Mead's estimate of membership in the Churches of Christ is considerably higher. In all cases, one must keep in mind the problems posed by religious statistics, especially in the case of loosely-organized groups such as the independent Christian churches and the Churches of Christ where no central authority exists which can establish "official" membership figures.

¹²In terms of size, the Mormons (and related groups) are the only other indigenous American movement of whom this claim might reasonably be made.

Campbell's thinking on church and state issues merits examination because, while he was primarily a religious leader and not a political thinker, he nevertheless often touched upon the political issues of his day, trying to provide guidance and leadership for the readers of his journals and the members of the Disciples churches. Although he tried to avoid strictly partisan matters, he was not hesitant in dealing with issues that he believed transcended party concerns and, in one important instance, he took an active part in the political process himself: in 1829-30, he served as an elected delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention, which met in Richmond.

Because of the significance of Campbell and the movement with which he was associated, I believe that a study of his thought on church-state issues will be of value. In this thesis, my methodology will be to look at Campbell's thought on these issues primarily by examining his writings--his periodicals, debates, and other publications. Research in these areas has been greatly facilitated by the recent reprinting of these periodicals. This study will begin with a brief survey of church-state relations in America up to Campbell's times. Next, a biographical sketch of Campbell, and an examination of the background of the Restoration Movement will set the stage for a more detailed look at Campbell's thought on church and state. Following this, I will examine the possible sources of Campbell's thought in this area, attempting to answer the questions outlined above concerning his relationship to both the religious and the Enlightenment streams of influence. Concluding material will deal with the application of Campbell's ideas on church and state, both in the ways in which he approached specific issues and in the ways in which his views

might have influenced the political activity (or non-activity) of people within the Restoration Movement.

CHAPTER ONE

CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN AMERICA TO THE EVE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

There is no single, standard definition of what is involved in "church-state relations," and this simple term actually encompasses several complex, interrelated problems and issues. Only a few of the scholars who have dealt with the subject have attempted to precisely define their terms. John F. Wilson, a noted American authority in this field, in his Church and State in American History, gave the following definitions of that phrase used in his title: "'Church and state in American history' is properly a consideration of the relationship(s) between temporal and spiritual authority structures--or religious institutions and civil governments."¹ Norman H. Maring, emeritus professor of church history at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an article in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion has said that the church and state issue involves "a problem of relationships varying with different concepts of State and of Church, and with the relative power of each institution to support its claim."² In an article in the recent Evangelical Dictionary

¹John F. Wilson, Church and State in American History (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1965), p. xiii.

²Norman H. Maring, "Church and State," in Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion, ed. by Paul Kevin Meagher, Thomas C. O'Brien, and Consuelo Maria Aherne (Washington: Corpus Publications, 1979), p. 772.

of Theology, Robert D. Linder, professor of history at Kansas State University, has noted that the phrase "church and state," is used to refer to "an ancient differentiation between two kinds of institutions that have structured and defined the lives of human beings."³ Linder also calls attention here to a further important element in the definition of this term: "Moreover, 'church and state' designates a certain kind of tension implicit in any society that contains these two institutions, even in those in which there is no attempt to separate them."⁴ One thing that is common in all of these definitions is an emphasis upon the relationship of church and state, and since that relationship can include such a wide range of subtopics or issues, perhaps no more precise definition is possible. In this thesis, the concept of "church and state " will be used to refer to the relationship of two institutions within a society--the church and the state.

An inquiry into the relationship of church and state in America must begin with some attention to European antecedents.⁵ Today, especially in America, such things as the principle of the separation of church and state are often taken for granted. But this principle was unheard of before the sixteenth century. From the time of the Roman emperor

³Robert D. Linder, "Church and State," in Walter A. Elwell, ed., Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 233.

⁴Ibid., p. 234.

⁵One could argue that such background must go back to the New Testament era or even the ancient Hebrew relationships of religion and state. Such in-depth background is not germane to the subject of this thesis, and has been done well in other works. See, for example, James E. Wood, Jr., "Biblical Foundations of Church-State Relations," in James E. Wood, Jr., E. Bruce Thompson, and Robert R. Miller, Church and State in Scripture, History, and Constitutional Law (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 1958), pp. 11-54; cf. Leo Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 3-30.

Constantine I in the early fourth century onward, there was a growing tendency to see the church and the state as united. It was generally thought that it must be so, in order that a common religion might be a kind of "social glue" binding the state together. Winfred E. Garrison, a noted American church historian at the University of Chicago earlier in this century, commented on this supposition:

For more than fourteen-hundred years . . . it was a universal assumption that the stability of the social order and the safety of the state demanded the religious solidarity of all the people in one church. Every responsible thinker, every ecclesiastic, every ruler and statesman who gave the matter any attention, held this as an axiom.⁶

The linking of the Christian church and the state began with Constantine. The Edict of Milan (c. 312) granted Christianity full equality with any other recognized religion in Rome. Officially, the Roman state was now neutral toward all religions, but in practice, because Constantine and many of his successors embraced Christianity themselves, it became the favored religion. This favor soon advanced to privilege, and the privilege into exclusive power. While it might be argued that this privilege and power proved beneficial to the church in many ways, it also brought increasing entanglement with the state, and state interference in religious affairs.⁷

While the linkage of church and state continued throughout the Middle Ages, there were also continual controversies over whether the church or the state had ultimate authority. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Roman empire, the church came to be the institution

⁶Winfred E. Garrison, "Characteristics of American Organized Religion," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences 25:6 (March 1948):16.

⁷M. Serle Bates, Religious Liberty: An Inquiry (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 134; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 14.

representing permanency and stability, and the bishops of Rome began to take responsibility for certain secular affairs, such as defense and the administration of justice. Gelasius I, bishop of Rome from 492 to 496, was the first to state the "two sword" doctrine. He recognized that there were two spheres of influence--royal power and priestly power--but he argued that priestly power was supreme in matters of religion, because in the divine judgment, priests would have to give account even for the souls of kings.⁸ This "Gelasian theory" was for several centuries the church's standard position on the relationship of church and state.

While the conflicts between emperor and pope over the extent of their authority were very important in the history of Europe in the Middle Ages, for the purposes of this thesis it is more significant to note that throughout this period both the popes and the civil rulers were agreed on the necessity of maintaining religious homogeneity within the realm. They cooperated in achieving and maintaining uniformity among believers, either by persuasion, or by compulsion, as the occasion demanded.

The Reformation brought about substantial changes in the church-state situation in Europe, as it did to almost every aspect of religious life in that era. The once popular view that the Reformation brought on a new era of religious freedom, however, has more recently been seriously debated.⁹ The rise of Protestantism was in fact accompanied by an

⁸ Linder, "Church and State," p. 234; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 16.

⁹ See Roland H. Bainton, "The Struggle for Religious Liberty," in his Studies on the Reformation, Collected Papers in Church History, Series Two (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 211ff; also, William A. Mueller, Church and State in Luther and Calvin: A Comparative Study (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 60; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, pp. 22-23.

inflammation of the spirit of religious persecution. Perhaps the late Roland Bainton, noted Reformation historian at Yale University, best summarized the developments of the Reformation era in this respect when he noted that this period "at once intensified persecution and at the same time opened the door to an ultimate freedom."¹⁰

Neither Luther nor Calvin held to the modern view that the state is secular and therefore neutral in religious matters. Both reformers saw the state as divinely ordained, but they saw the church primarily in spiritual, and not temporal, terms. Church and state occupied two distinct spheres, and although the state might uphold and protect the church, the two institutions were not identical. Luther, at first, did not intend for his reform movement to become allied with temporal rulers. But various problems that he faced led him to turn to the German princes for support, and the eventual result of this was the development of territorial churches.¹¹ In Calvin's Geneva, though church and state influenced each other to a great extent, there was, theoretically at least, a clear distinction between the two institutions.¹²

In the context of background to the American situation, the most significant developments of the Reformation era in this regard were not the views of Luther and Calvin on church-state relationships, but rather the insistence of certain Radical Reformers upon complete separation of church and state. The Anabaptists were the chief sixteenth-century representatives of this position. Because this radical proposal seemed to

¹⁰Bainton, "The Struggle for Religious Liberty," p. 211.

¹¹Mueller, Church and State in Luther and Calvin, pp. 164-166.

¹²Ibid., pp. 125-126.

threaten anarchy, the Anabaptists were severely persecuted by both Protestants and Catholics. But their ideal of church-state separation was picked up by related movements in England in the seventeenth century--Baptists, Quakers, and Independents--and eventually this was the principle that triumphed in the United States.¹³

Though the first successful English colony in North America was established in Virginia, when one thinks of the church-state situation in early colonial America, it is the New England Puritans that come most prominently to mind. Though there were, from the very beginning, those among the settlers in New England who were not devoutly religious and who had come to the New World for a variety of reasons of their own, nevertheless the religious motivation was primary for many of the early Puritan settlers, and especially so for their leaders. They came to set up a Puritan commonwealth. Contrary to one of the most persistent myths of American religious history, they did not come to establish a haven of religious freedom and tolerance. They did seek freedom in the wilderness, but it was the freedom to build their own state in which their own form of religion could flourish. E. Bruce Thompson, emeritus professor of history at Baylor University, is no doubt correct in his assessment of their intentions:

There is a deeply rooted idea in American historical lore that the colonists came to America in search of religious liberty. The religious animus, although inextricably interwoven with economic and social motivations, was unquestionably strong, but most of the religiously motivated colonists had no intention of tolerating any religion other than their own. They sought a wilderness asylum where the faithful could build a 'holy commonwealth' dedicated to the perpetuation of their version of the truth. They did not come

¹³Linder, "Church and State," p. 235. See also, E. Bruce Thompson, "The Development in History of the Principle of Separation of Church and State," in James E. Wood, Jr., E. Bruce Thompson, and Robert L. Miller, Church and State in Scripture, History, and Constitutional Law (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1958), pp. 67-68, 74-75. (Hereafter cited as Thompson, "Developments in History.")

to experiment, but to preserve an already fully developed system of beliefs.¹⁴

What the Puritans were seeking to do in New England was not especially innovative. Basically, it was modelled along European lines: they were attempting to build a state in which the "true religion," as they understood it, was supported and protected by the power of the state, and no other form of religion (and certainly not irreligion) would be tolerated. Although the degree to which this concept was actually put into practice varied from one country to another, this was the generally accepted European view of church-state relations in the seventeenth century.¹⁵

Eventually, the Puritans who had sought to separate themselves from a corrupt state church in England ended up establishing Congregationalism as the state church of New England; but there was at least one important difference between the established churches of Europe and that of New England. The standards of membership in the state churches of Europe were often lax; church membership was usually co-extensive with the population of the state. But the standards of church membership among the Puritans were more exacting. The Puritans were of the conviction that only men and women who could present evidence of an inward religious experience should be admitted to church membership.¹⁶ Sydney Ahlstrom noted the striking significance of this requirement:

¹⁴Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 76.

¹⁵Perry Miller, "The Puritan State and Puritan Society," in his Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 144.

¹⁶Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 146.

Seen in full perspective, this was a radical demand. For the first time in Christendom, a state church with vigorous conceptions of enforced uniformity in belief and practice was requiring an internal, experiential test of church membership. Many future problems of the New England churches stemmed from this decision.¹⁷

The Puritan establishment in New England was founded upon an inconsistency that became manifest as time passed. They were trying to establish a church that would exercise firm control over the entire population, and yet membership in that church was limited by strict standards. Franklin Littell has summed up this inconsistency succinctly: "A pilgrim church cannot be a successful establishment. A church which stressed membership confirmed by live faith and fortified by internal discipline cannot include the whole population on its regimen."¹⁸ As long as the regenerate church members were the majority, there was little sign of discontent with this system. But by the end of the first generation of colonization in New England, church members were no longer the majority in many areas. The non-members not only included large numbers of those who made little pretense of piety, but also many who were in general agreement with Calvinist doctrine and with Congregationalism but who simply could not qualify as church members on the basis of an experience of regenerating grace.

The Puritans attempted to deal with this problem among their descendants with the so-called Half-Way Covenant. Under this agreement, adopted at a formal synod of New England churches in 1662, baptism was seen as sufficient for bringing a person into a limited form of church membership. Full church membership, however, still required testimony of an experience of regeneration. The Half-Way Covenant gained wide, though

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Franklin H. Littell, From State Church to Pluarlism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 8.

not universal approval in New England, and seemed to provide a way to deal with the problem of declension among the churches.¹⁹

But even after the introduction of the Half-Way Covenant, the saints continued to lose their grip on the control of the state. The members brought into the church under the Half-Way Covenant were not as zealous as their forefathers in maintaining religious uniformity. There were also continuing pressures for a widening of the franchise and for toleration of other religious viewpoints. These pressures came from both internal and external sources. Internally, there were the expanding communities made up of many people who held differing religious views, or who had little interest in religion. Externally, there was the imperial authority of England, which was reasserted in the revocation of the old charter in 1684, and the issuance of a new one in 1691. The new charter provided for, among other things, a widening of the franchise to include nonchurch members, and the toleration of all Christians except Roman Catholics.²⁰

In the other colonies in America, the established churches never exercised the kind of control that the Congregational churches did in New England. Four of the original thirteen colonies never had an officially established church (Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey), but even in the ones that did, a variety of local conditions prevented imitation of the New England pattern. In Dutch New Amsterdam, for example, the Reformed Church was the state church, and residents were compelled to contribute to the support of the church and its ministry. But English

¹⁹ Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 158-159.

²⁰ Alan Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 36-37.

Presbyterians and Congregationalists were allowed to build their own churches. After the Dutch turned over control of New Amsterdam to the English in 1664, New York developed what has been called "multiple establishment," a system whereby all inhabitants were compelled to pay a tax, out of which all state-approved Protestant churches were supported.²¹

In Virginia, Anglicanism was the established religion, and, on paper at least, there were many similarities to the situation in New England. Attendance at Anglican services was required, ministers were paid by the state, and severe legal penalties were provided for moral infractions. But, unlike New England, these provisions were practically unenforceable in Virginia. For one thing, the pattern of settlement made the village-centered life of New England impossible. Many settlers lived on scattered plantations, too far away from any church, even if the law did seek to compel attendance. In the back country of Virginia, large numbers of dissenters, including Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, crept in and soon outnumbered the Anglicans, but because of the size of the territory, there was little the authorities could do to prevent this. The Anglicans in Virginia were also handicapped by a paucity of ordained clergy.²²

In three of the remaining colonies there were significant advances toward religious toleration in the seventeenth century. These colonies were Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

Roger Williams, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island, was banished from Massachusetts in the winter of 1635-1636 after several

²¹Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, pp. 79-80.

²²Thompson, "Developments in History," pp. 83-84.

controversies with the Puritan leadership. One of the chief factors in these controversies was Williams' contention that the state had no authority in matters of religion, and that the power of the state could not be used to enforce religious conformity. He did not come to this position because he took religion less seriously than the Puritans; rather he was in some respects more earnest. He believed that the close ties of church and state which prevailed in Massachusetts were wrong because they would inevitably lead to the secularization of the church. As historian Alan Simpson points out concerning William's thinking:

In nine-tenths of his opinions Roger Williams saw eye to eye with the Cottons and Winthrops who banished him. Like them, he thought that salvation was all that mattered. . . . He broke with them because he convinced himself, in a series of collisions with the Massachusetts authorities, that they were not taking sufficiently seriously the gulf which separates the regenerate from the unregenerate and that the covenanted community of the New England pattern was actually a horrible perversion of God's declared Will.²³

Williams recognized the power of the state only in external matters. One of his specific controversies with the Massachusetts establishment was over the right of civil government to enforce the "Two Tables" of the Decalogue. The second table (the last five of the Ten Commandments) dealt with moral and ethical relationships between men. Williams had no qualm about state enforcement of matters pertaining to these commandments. But the first table of the Decalogue dealt with the worship of God, and Williams did not believe that the civil magistrates had any right to enforce the provisions of these commandments.²⁴

²³ Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England, pp. 46-47; cf. Perry Miller, Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1953), pp. 27-28.

²⁴ Miller, Roger Williams, pp. 28-29; Pfeiffer, Church, State, and Freedom, pp. 84-85; Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 154.

To the leadership of Puritan New England, Williams represented a threat of the gravest order. In 1635 he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to deportation to England, but instead, he fled with four companions into the wilderness beyond the borders of Massachusetts. Purchasing a tract of land from the Narragansett Indians, they established Providence on Narragansett Bay, a settlement which quickly became a haven for Baptists, Quakers, and other nonconformists fleeing from Puritan intolerance and persecution.²⁵ In Providence, Williams founded what is generally considered to be the first Baptist congregation in America in 1639, although Williams himself was only briefly a Baptist before moving on to another stage in his life-long religious pilgrimage.²⁶

The covenant which the founders of Providence entered into for their own self-government limited the authority of the state to "civil things." This was reaffirmed in the charter granted by the British crown in 1663, which provided that no person would be molested or punished for differences of opinion in matters of religion, as long as the civil peace of the colony was not disturbed by these disagreements.²⁷

The achievements in Rhode Island, especially when sanctioned by the British crown in the charter for the colony, marked a notable

²⁵ Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 107-108; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 85.

²⁶ Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1980), p. 202; Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 170. According to Stokes and Pfeffer, Williams had been, successively, an Anglican, a Congregationalist, a Separatist, and a Baptist, and eventually became a "Seeker," one who "was skeptical of the special divine claims of all Churches and creeds but accepted the fundamentals of Christianity," Church and State in the U.S., p. 14.

²⁷ Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 85.

milestone in the history of church-state relations in America.²⁸ It would be hard to overestimate the importance of Roger Williams and Rhode Island for the later course of church-state relations in America.

The founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn,²⁹ had, like Roger Williams, a vision of a colony that would be a haven of religious toleration. But in Penn's case there was also the practical consideration that religious toleration would bring in the many settlers needed to make a colony profitable. Pfeffer is no doubt correct in his contention that, "Pennsylvania was colonized partly as a substantial business venture and partly as a 'holy experiment,' conceived in a liberal yet distinctly religious spirit."³⁰

Penn had inherited from his father a large claim against Charles II. In 1681 the king settled this obligation with an extensive land grant in America, which became the colony of Pennsylvania. Penn, who had himself suffered imprisonment in England for his Quaker convictions, had long advocated principles of religious toleration. In his colony in America, he had the chance to put these views into practice. His "Frame of Government" for the new colony, published in April, 1682, provided that anyone who professed a belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, could serve in the government. The "Great Laws," adopted in December of that year, stated that no one would be molested for their religious beliefs, as long as they professed faith in the one Almighty God. No one was to be compelled to support or attend any religious services other than of their own choice.

²⁸Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 83.

²⁹For a brief sketch of Penn, see Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 207-209.

³⁰Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 88; see his further comments on p. 89.

These basic principles were in force throughout the colonial period in Pennsylvania.³¹

Toleration was not complete, however, in Pennsylvania. The right to profess no religion was not expressly protected by the laws of the colony. Irreligion was punishable by law: there were laws against profanity, and the cessation of work on Sunday was required. Also, the extension of political privileges and the right to participate in the government, was expressly limited to Christians.³²

But as practiced, toleration was realized to a great extent in Pennsylvania, and it also had the desired result of drawing a large number of settlers to the colony. Immigrants streamed to Pennsylvania from both Britain and the Continent, resulting in a population growth more rapid than any other colony's. No other colony attracted such a variety of religious groups. In 1776 the Christian groups in Pennsylvania included members of the German Reformed and the Dutch Reformed churches, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Quakers, Episcopalians, Baptists, Moravians, Mennonites, Dunkers, and Roman Catholics.³³

Pennsylvania was significant as a harbinger of things to come. Ahlstrom has called it, "a paradigm of latter-day American democracy,"³⁴ and "a populous antecedent of America's pluralistic society,"³⁵ in respect to the ways in which it dealt with the problems of religious pluralism.

³¹ Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State in the U.S., pp. 18-19.

³² Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 89.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 112.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 208.

The example of Pennsylvania was extremely important in the later development of the church-state tradition in America.

The situation in early colonial Maryland showed nearly as great promise for the prospects of religious liberty as did the developments in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, but the achievements there were not as lasting. George Calvert (c. 1580-1632), the first Lord Baltimore, founder and proprietor of Maryland, had motives similar to those of Penn--a sincere desire to provide a haven for those of the same faith as himself, coupled with a desire to attract a large number of settlers in order to make the colony successful. Calvert was a convert to Catholicism, and sought to provide a refuge for the persecuted Roman Catholics of England. George Calvert died in 1632, just as the charter for the colony was being approved, but his son, Cecilius Calvert (c. 1605-1675), who became the second Lord Baltimore, carried out the plans and ambitions of his father. Maryland was established as a colony where there was mutual toleration for all Christian faiths.³⁶

Early immigration to Maryland was heavily Catholic, and as a result Roman Catholics held the choicest lands and dominated the colonial government. But as large numbers of Protestants began to come, this situation caused problems. Cecilius Calvert issued instructions to his deputies in Maryland that the Catholic colonists were to take every precaution against providing an occasion of offense to the Protestants. The governor of Maryland was also required to take an oath, swearing to protect any Christian who was molested because of their religion and to punish the molester. This liberal spirit of toleration seemed to have worked in

³⁶Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 81; Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 85.

practice; Pfeffer notes that there does not appear to have been a single case of persecution for religious belief in the first fifteen years of the colony's existence.³⁷

In 1649, Maryland's colonial assembly passed the so-called "Act of Toleration," actually entitled "An Act Concerning Religion," which granted toleration to all Christians who believed in the Trinity. However, it also decreed the death penalty for anyone who denied the doctrine of the Trinity or the deity of Jesus. Thus Jews, atheists, and Christians of unitarian leanings were excluded. A second section of the Act provided fines and imprisonment for disparaging or speaking reproachfully of any person with regard to their religion. Fines or imprisonment were also imposed for profaning the Lord's Day.³⁸ The fourth section of the Act was the only part that specifically addressed Toleration. It provided that:

'no person or persons . . . professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall henceforth be in any ways troubled, molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion, nor in the free exercise thereof . . . nor anyway compelled to the belief or exercise of any religion against his or her consent.'³⁹

In the context of its times, the Maryland Act of Toleration represents a great advance. The things it proscribed or punished were similarly banned in most of the other colonies and in England, but its provisions for toleration, even though limited to Trinitarian Christians, were liberal for the times. Despite its shortcomings, it was, as Pfeffer concludes, "an important landmark in the history of the evolution of the

³⁷ Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 82.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

³⁹ Cited by Pfeffer, *ibid.*

American principle of separation and religious liberty."⁴⁰

But the achievements in Maryland were short-lived. The revolutionary struggles in England had repercussions in the colonies, of course, and one of the results was that after James II was driven from the throne of England in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a royal government replaced proprietary control in Maryland. The Anglican church was then legally established. The public exercise of the Catholic religion, as well as the admission of Catholic immigrants, was forbidden.⁴¹ Thus, the hope for a Catholic refuge in America, which was at least a part of George Calvert's original vision for his colony, was lost, and Maryland's experiment with religious toleration ended as a failure.

Overall, the situation in colonial America in regard to church-state relations and religious liberty was one in which established state churches and rigid intolerance were often the rule. Establishment did not always mean the same thing, however, and it worked with more effectiveness in some areas than it did in others. Moreover, there were havens of toleration and religious liberty in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, and briefly in Maryland. But most importantly, there was in all of the colonies, throughout the colonial period, growing pressure for toleration and broader religious freedoms. Five factors contributed to this pressure: (1) the religiously pluralistic nature of the population; (2) the demands of minority religious groups; (3) the demands of the unchurched; (4) the influence of the First Great Awakening; and (5) the effects of the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴¹ Ibid. Cf., Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State in the U.S., pp. 12-13; Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 338-339.

American Revolution. As will be seen below, several of these factors are interrelated.

Though there were many areas in colonial America where one religious group dominated, religious pluralism was a fact of life in America from the very beginning. The extent of this pluralism by 1700 was dramatically illustrated by Ahlstrom:

A traveler in 1700 making his way from Boston to the Carolinas would encounter Congregationalists of varying intensity, Baptists of several varieties, Presbyterians, Quakers, and several other forms of Puritan radicalism; Dutch, German, and French Reformed; Swedish, Finnish, and German Lutherans; Mennonites and radical pietists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics; here and there a Jewish congregation, a few Rosicrucians; and, of course, a vast number of the unchurched--some of them powerfully alienated from any form of institutional religion.⁴²

Many of these religious groups were persecuted, or at least politically disadvantaged, in some of the colonies. Nevertheless, they represented a potent force in early American life. As Thompson points out, "By 1776 there was not a single colony in which a combination of these unprivileged sects could not command a majority of the population. Hence their pressure was irresistible and their suppression impracticable."⁴³ Pfeffer comments on the ways in which this diversity of religious groups influenced the movement toward religious freedom and separation of church and state:

In the first place, since there were too many dissenting sects to be extirpated, there was no alternative but to learn to live together. In the second place, daily exposure to different religions weakened that passionate conviction in the exclusive rightness of one's own faith which is a necessary prerequisite of persecution for the sake of religion. Finally, the great

⁴² Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 4.

⁴³ Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 87.

diversity of sects made religious uniformity impossible, and without such uniformity establishment could not long survive.⁴⁴

Integrally connected to the pressures that pluralism brought to bear were the demands of minority religious groups for a recognition of their rights. Though these groups were often small and insignificant alone, taken collectively they represented the majority in all of the colonies. American historian William Warren Sweet contended that these minority religious groups were among the most significant forces working for religious liberty in the colonies. He divided these groups into two classes: first, those who advocated religious liberty from principle; and secondly, those who did so from policy. The Quakers and the various Baptist groups were examples of the first class--they advocated religious liberty out of deeply held principles. Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and the Reformed churches were all examples of the second class--they were not opposed to state churches in principle, but, as Sweet put it, "where they themselves were not the privileged Church, they were to be found in every instance on the side advocating religious liberty."⁴⁵

Of the groups that advocated religious liberty from principle, the Baptists had the greatest influence in colonial America, because of their numbers and their distribution throughout the colonies. They were the most militant of any colonial religious groups in the struggle for religious freedom and its corollary, the separation of church and state.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 95.

⁴⁵ William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 322-323 (quotation found on p. 323).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 333. Pfeffer and Thompson also make this point, cf. Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 101; Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 89.

The Baptists were largely frontiersmen and farmers, but they were also represented by some leaders of the first rank. Perhaps the most significant of these, as regards the struggle for religious liberty, was Isaac Backus (1724-1806). A Massachusetts preacher, Backus was chosen by the Warren (Massachusetts) Baptist Association to chair a committee to present their grievances to the colonial authorities. In this position and in other capacities he labored untiringly, pleading for religious liberty and separation of church and state. In 1774 he urged Samuel Adams to adopt a consistent policy on separation--pointing out that the British taxation of the American colonies was no more unjust than the British taxation of Baptists for support of a state church. Also in 1774 Backus and other members of the Warren Association, together with representatives of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, presented the Baptists' grievances before the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia. Though they convinced several delegates from the Massachusetts contingents of the justice of their cause, no immediate results were forthcoming.⁴⁷ But Backus continued his labors throughout his life, and he lived to see many of the principles he advocated incorporated into the new nation's Constitution.

The vast number of unchurched people in colonial America represents a third source of pressure for religious liberty. Though it is difficult to find precise information on church affiliation in the eighteenth century, most authorities agree that it was small. Robert T. Handy estimates that by 1800 no more than 10 percent of Americans were members

⁴⁷ Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 292-293; Torbet, History of the Baptists, p. 236.

of any congregation.⁴⁸ Sweet contended that by the end of the colonial period there were more unchurched people in America, in proportion to the population, than anywhere else in Christendom.⁴⁹ These statistics could be somewhat misleading, however, for religion did play a more important role in the life of the colonies than these figures might indicate. Religious sentiment was widespread, but formal affiliation was not.

This large body of unchurched people, whether they were personally religious but unaffiliated with any institution, or simply indifferent toward religion, contributed forcefully to the movement toward religious freedom, and disestablishment. They keenly resented the taxes levied for the support of state churches, and the political and social disabilities laid upon nonchurch members. Not being connected with any church themselves, they were not likely to either persecute others for differing religious views, or to support the actions of dominant religious groups that sought to do so.

Many of these unchurched people, especially among the intellectuals, had been deeply influenced by Enlightenment philosophy and political thinking. This in turn led them to support religious freedom, for it was one of the natural rights that Enlightenment political ideals recognized. Many of the most important leaders in the struggle for religious liberty in America would fall into this class--such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Both of these men, though nominal church members, were philosophically liberal thinkers and had very little in common with the orthodox churchmen of their time. These and many other prominent leaders

⁴⁸ Robert T. Handy, A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 162.

⁴⁹ Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 334.

of the colonial era had come under the influence of rationalistic Deism, perhaps the religious expression most characteristic of the Enlightenment. Many of them were either antagonistic or at least apathetic toward institutionalized religion and formal worship, but nevertheless they became forceful advocates of religious freedom.⁵⁰

The fourth significant factor in the mounting pressure for religious toleration was the evangelical religious revival of the mid-eighteenth century, commonly known as the First Great Awakening.⁵¹ In New England, this movement was associated with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), among others. Edwards contributed greatly, though perhaps unintentionally, to the cause of religious freedom. He emphasized the importance of individual conversion and the exaltation of the church as more than a mere political instrument. Ideas such as these tended to deemphasize the importance of a state church, and, as Stokes and Pfeffer observed, "Edwards perhaps far beyond all men of his time, smote the staggering blow which made ecclesiastical establishment impossible to America, although it is unlikely that he meant to do anything of the kind."⁵²

The First Great Awakening resulted in the breaking up of religious majorities in many areas, which made it difficult for any group to demand establishment. It greatly strengthened the dissenting groups who were

⁵⁰For a discussion of the effects of the Enlightenment on American religion in general, see Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 350-359.

⁵¹The Great Awakening of c. 1725-1775 is often called the "First Great Awakening," to distinguish it from the "Second Great Awakening" of c. 1790-1830.

⁵²Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State in the U.S., p. 26.

calling the loudest for religious freedom, often by conversion of the unchurched, but also by defections from the established churches. The theology of the Awakening, stressing the duties of the individual, and direct accountability to God, was not consistent with the idea of enforced religious conformity.⁵³ Establishment continued to exist for some time after the Awakening, even into the early national period in some states, but the meaning of establishment had been changed considerably.⁵⁴

Lastly, both the ideology and the practical expedients of the Revolutionary War era tended to bring support to the cause of religious freedom. The ideas of inalienable rights, popular sovereignty, and the social contract, expressed in the Declaration of Independence--very Lockean ideas, incidentally--were inconsistent with the idea of privileged churches and religious intolerance. In addition, there was the practical need of unifying the people in the time of war.⁵⁵ In some cases, concessions were made to dissenting churches in order to secure their cooperation in the struggle. Petitions for the relief of compulsory tithes were more sympathetically received than they had been previously. The Continental Army extended the privilege of performing religious services among the troops to chaplains of many different faiths. These chaplains, and the soldiers themselves, were exposed to different religious ideas and rituals

⁵³The effects of the Great Awakening as regards the movement toward religious liberty are discussed by Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State in the U.S., pp. 25-26; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 103; and Handy, History of the Churches in the U.S. and Canada, pp. 111-112.

⁵⁴Wilson, in Church and State in American History, pp. 32-33, discusses the changes in the "language of establishment" brought about by religious pluralism and evangelical revivalism.

⁵⁵Thompson, "Developments in History," p. 88; Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 97.

as they mixed with other soldiers from all parts of the country. This exposure and familiarity tended toward the destruction of the sense of exclusiveness that seems to be a necessary element in religious intolerance. Roman Catholics in the colonies received more fair and tolerant treatment during the Revolution, in order to enlist their support for the struggle, and also because the Continental Congress wished to enlist the support, or at least the neutrality of Canada, which was overwhelmingly Catholic.⁵⁶

At the beginning of the war, nine of the thirteen colonies had established churches. By the end of the war, some strides were being made toward disestablishment in several states. New England was still solidly Congregational, with state-supported churches in every state except Rhode Island. In the South, Maryland and South Carolina maintained their official ties to the Church of England, but this was a situation that could not last long in the newly independent country. Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia had, during the war, ended their religious establishments. Religious tests for office holders also continued to exist, in varying forms, in several states after independence, but the trend toward more complete religious liberty had begun.⁵⁷

Though the great legal milestone of the First Amendment was not achieved until 1791, and though disestablishment was not completed in all the states for nearly another generation, the end of the War for Independence marked a significant shift in American church-state relations. Just as, in the memorable words of John Adams, the American Revolution itself

⁵⁶Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, pp. 97-98.

⁵⁷Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State in the U.S., pp. 36-37.

was first accomplished "in the minds and hearts of the people," before the fighting commenced,⁵⁸ in the same way, the cause of religious freedom had caught the attention and gained the approval of most Americans before the historic measures ensuring these freedoms were enacted. The last quarter of the eighteenth century in America witnessed the triumph of the principle of religious freedom and with it, ultimately, came the separation of church and state. When the Federal Constitution was ratified in 1788, the document as originally adopted, without the Bill of Rights, said very little in regard to religion. This omission was significant: many of the delegates evidently thought that the federal government should have nothing at all to do with religion, and that the absence of any mention of the subject implied that the government had no power to act in matters of religion.⁵⁹

Originally, the only portion of the Constitution that dealt specifically with religion was Article VI--a prohibition against requiring any kind of religious test as a qualification for holding office under the United States. Charles Pickney of South Carolina had proposed this clause, which was adopted without much debate according to Oliver Ellsworth, another delegate.⁶⁰ There were those who maintained that some kind of test was needed to guard against morally lax people gaining office, but others argued that an unscrupulous person would not be

⁵⁸ John Adams, letter to Dr. J. Morris, November 29, 1815, in Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, With a Life of the Author (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856), 10:182. See similar comments in Adams letter to H. Niles, February 13, 1818, 10:282.

⁵⁹ Pfeffer, Church, State, and Freedom, p. 122.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

deterred by such an oath or test, and that government had no right to meddle with the opinions of the people.⁶¹

Pickney has also proposed another clause for inclusion in the Constitution. Many of the delegates felt that the absence of any mention of religion was sufficient to imply that the federal government had no power to enact laws dealing with religion. Pickney wanted to make this provision explicit, and proposed a provision that stated, ". . . the legislature of the United States shall pass no law on the subject of religion. . . ."⁶² Though his proposal was not adopted at the Constitutional convention, it did of course reappear in substantially unchanged form in the First Amendment. During the ratification debates, the convention delegates found that the American people wanted specific guarantees of religious freedom and other natural rights. In nearly every state, during the ratification process, there was some objection expressed concerning the absence of a restriction on the federal government with respect to legislation regarding religion. Six of the states ratified the Constitution but also proposed amendments guaranteeing religious liberty, and North Carolina and Rhode Island would not ratify at all until a bill of rights including religious freedom was adopted.⁶³

The adoption of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, with its guarantee of no establishment of religion, nor restrictions on the free exercise thereof, was the culmination of a long struggle for religious freedom. The factors discussed in this chapter all played a significant

⁶¹Ibid., p. 124.

⁶²Ibid., p. 123.

⁶³Ibid., p. 125.

part in bringing this about. In one sense, it was the end of a struggle--religious freedom and separation of church and state were now the law of the land. But in another sense, it was only the beginning of a new series of controversies--controversies that continue to the present day and show no signs of abating, concerning just what these constitutional provisions mean and how they are to be applied.

As the leader of a large religious group, Alexander Campbell found himself involved in several of the church-state issues of his day. After a sketch of Campbell himself and the background of the Restoration Movement in America, the remainder of this thesis will focus on his involvement with these issues.

CHAPTER TWO

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Alexander Campbell was born near Ballymena, in the county of Antrim in northern Ireland, on September 12, 1788. He was the eldest child of Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and Jane Corneigle Campbell (1763-1835).¹ Thomas Campbell's ancestors were originally from Scotland, but it is not precisely known when they had come to Ireland; it was at least two generations before Thomas Campbell.² Archibald Campbell, the father of Thomas, served for a time as a soldier in the British Army, and fought in America under General Wolfe in the French and Indian War. Religiously, Archibald Campbell was a Roman Catholic who converted to Anglicanism. When Thomas Campbell, as a young man, embraced Presbyterianism and decided to study for the ministry, he faced some initial resistance from

¹Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell: Embracing a View of the Origins, Progress, and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated, 2 vol. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1897; two-volumes-in-one reprint of original edition published, 1868, 1870), 1:19.

²Ibid., 1:21. Richardson is the ultimate source of much of what is known about the life of Thomas Campbell; later biographers have relied upon it heavily. Among more recent works on Thomas Campbell, perhaps the best is Lester G. McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954). Also helpful, especially in regard to Thomas Campbell's early years in America, is William Herbert Hanna, Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1935).

his father, but eventually gained his consent. In 1783, he entered Glasgow University, and studied there until 1786.³

After finishing the course of studies at Glasgow, Thomas Campbell entered the theological school of the Anti-Burgher Seceders at Whitburn, Scotland. The usual course of studies at Whitburn consisted of five annual sessions of eight weeks each. In the interim between the annual sessions, Thomas taught school and preached occasionally. When he finished the theological program, he submitted to the usual examination before the synod in Ireland and, passing this satisfactorily, he was licensed to preach.

While studying at the theological school, Thomas Campbell met Jane Corneigle, whom he married in June, 1787.⁴ In the early years of their marriage, the Campbell family moved about frequently (four moves in ten years). In each location, Thomas taught school and preached. His first regular pastorate was at Ahorey, in County Armagh, in Ireland, where he moved about 1798. The family settled on a small farm near the town of Rich Hill, a few miles from the church. Most of Alexander Campbell's early life was spent at Rich Hill. Richardson records little about Campbell's early schooling, but it appears that most of his education was accomplished under his father's tutelage.⁵ Besides attending to the secular education of his children, Thomas Campbell also gave serious

³Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), p. 97.

⁴This is an approximate date; the family records were later lost. This is the date Richardson gives, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:19.

⁵Ibid., 1:31.

attention to their religious education, believing this to be both a parental and a ministerial duty.⁶

The church that Alexander Campbell attended in his youth was, of course, that in which his father preached. Thomas Campbell was a minister of the Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church. This group, more formally known as the Constitutional Associate Presbytery, or the Original Secession Church, was a product of successive separations out of the Church of Scotland. The first of these divisions came about in 1733 as a result of disagreement over the right of congregations to appoint their own ministers--the Seceders arguing for more participation by the congregation in this process. In 1747, there was a schism among the Seceders over the question of the burgh or burgher oaths required in some Scottish towns. These oaths required the burgesses (mayors) to swear to uphold the "true religion publicly preached within the realm."⁷ Some Seceders would not swear to them, believing that the oaths bound one to support the established church. The group opposed to the oaths became known as the General Associate Synod, but more popularly were called simply "Anti-Burghers." In the late eighteenth century, the "New Light" controversy arose among the Presbyterians in Scotland. It concerned the interpretation of portions of the Westminster Confession that dealt with the role of the magistrates in ecclesiastical affairs.⁸ Among the Seceders, this controversy caused a schism into "New Light" and "Old

⁶ Ibid., 1:35-36.

⁷ J. H. S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 323.

⁸ Ibid., p. 324. See also, William Ferguson, Scotland: 1689 to the Present, The Edinburgh History of Scotland, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), pp. 228-229.

Light" factions.⁹ Thomas Campbell, already an ordained minister in Anti-Burgher Seceders when this controversy occurred, remained with the Old Light group. The complicated "genealogy" of these various schisms is shown on a chart on the following page. Although the controversy over the burgher oaths was relevant only in Scotland, the schism between the two factions was perpetuated in both Ireland and America by Presbyterian emigrants.¹⁰

By 1807, the labor and confinement associated with several years of preaching and teaching had taken a toll on Thomas Campbell's health. His doctor recommended a complete change of habits and suggested that a long sea voyage might provide the change of environment and the prolonged rest that he needed. In accordance with this advice, Thomas Campbell sailed to America in April, 1807, arriving in Philadelphia after a thirty-five day voyage. He had left his family with the understanding that he would send for them if he found prospects in America pleasing, or return if he did not.¹¹

Thomas Campbell arrived in Philadelphia in May, 1807, and found that the synod of the Seceder Presbyterians was then in session there. Presenting his ministerial credentials to them, he was accepted into "Christian and ministerial communion,"¹² and was appointed to fill

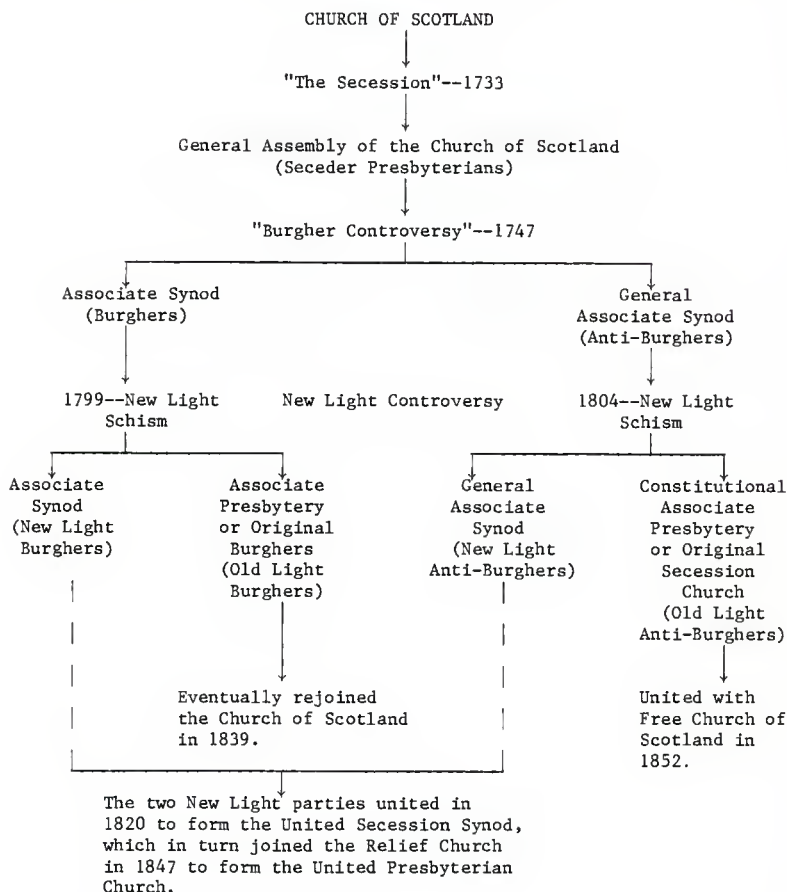
⁹It should be noted that these terms do not have the same meaning here that they did in the schism in American Presbyterianism.

¹⁰McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 97, 105-106.

¹¹Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:78-81.

¹²Hanna, Thomas Campbell, Seceder, p. 23, citing the original minutes of the Associate Synod of North America. McAllister notes that this synod was officially an Anti-Burgher group, but since the Burghers never had a distinct organization in America, all Seceders in America belonged to this synod. See, McAllister, Thomas Campbell, pp. 67-68.

ORIGINS OF THE OLD LIGHT ANTI-BURGHER SECEDER PRESBYTERIANS¹³



¹³ Sources: Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland*, pp. 323-324, 362; Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present*, pp. 122-124; John McCleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1946; reprint, 1974), pp. 167-185, and pp. 229-237.

vacancies in the Presbytery of Chartiers, in western Pennsylvania. Though Thomas Campbell was, initially, warmly received by the Seceders in America, within a few months an incident occurred which was eventually to lead to his separation from the Presbyterians. The occasion was a "sacramental celebration" (i.e., a communion service) in a remote area near Cannamaugh, Pennsylvania. Since any kind of religious services were infrequent in this area, many who belonged to other Presbyterian groups were in attendance. Campbell expressed regret at the divisions within the churches, and suggested that anyone present who felt prepared might partake of communion, without regard to which Presbyterian party they were affiliated. William Wilson, another Seceder minister who had accompanied Campbell on this trip, considered this proposal a dangerous innovation, and brought charges against Campbell at the next meeting of the presbytery.¹⁴ Similar charges were also brought by another Seceder minister, a Rev. Anderson.¹⁵ It is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis to trace out all the ecclesiastical maneuverings that went on over these charges and Campbell's defense against them. The various hearings and appeals lasted for about a year, and the result was that in May, 1809--almost exactly two years from the time he had been accepted into the Presbytery of Chartiers--Thomas Campbell severed his ministerial connection with the Seceder Presbyterians.¹⁶

¹⁴ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:223-224. Richardson deals with the whole controversy between Campbell and the Seceders in this same work, 1:222-230. Other sources include, Hanna, Thomas Campbell, Seceder, pp. 31-100. Hanna makes extensive use of the original minutes of the Presbytery of Chartiers and the Associate Synod. See also, McAllister, Thomas Campbell, pp. 73-95.

¹⁵ Anderson's first name does not appear in any of the sources.

¹⁶ McAllister, Thomas Campbell, pp. 94-95.

No doubt this decision caused Thomas Campbell a great deal of personal anguish, but it did not end his activity as a preacher. He still found many opportunities to preach and teach, and he found a new freedom to fellowship with people from a variety of religious backgrounds. He preached wherever opportunity was afforded him, and often dwelt on a theme dear to his own heart: a plea for the union of the divided church.¹⁷ Gradually, a group of like-minded people began to collect around him, and they met together informally for several months. In time, this group decided to organize itself more formally, although it did not intend to start a new religious denomination, or even a separate congregation.¹⁸ In the summer of 1809, Thomas Campbell and these like-minded people formed the "Christian Association of Washington" (named for the nearby town of Washington, Pennsylvania). Thomas Campbell wrote what is probably his most famous work, "The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington," as a statement of the purposes and objectives of this organization. In this document, the first expression of some of the basic tenets of the American Restoration Movement are found.¹⁹ The "Declaration and Address" will be discussed further below.²⁰

During Thomas Campbell's controversy with the Seceder Presbyterians in America, his son Alexander was a student at Glasgow University in Scotland, and was going through a period of questioning and self-examination

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁹ The complete text of the "Declaration and Address" can be found in F. L. Rowe, ed., Pioneer Sermons and Addresses (Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 1908), pp. 14-104, and also in Charles A. Young, Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union (Chicago: Christian Century Company, 1904), pp. 71-210.

²⁰ See below, pp. 56-57.

concerning his own allegiance to the Seceder denomination. That Alexander Campbell was in Scotland at all was only by accident. The Campbell family, intending to join Thomas, had set sail for America in October, 1808, but on this first trip their ship ran aground off Scotland.²¹ None of the family was injured severely in the shipwreck, but it was a trying experience. Richardson records that Alexander Campbell decided in the midst of this crisis that he would devote his life to the ministry, but it appears that this was a course he had been considering previously.²² After the shipwreck, the family desired to rest and recuperate. By the time they were sufficiently recovered, the shipping season was over. They determined, therefore, to remain in Scotland and make another attempt to reach America the next year.

The delay in emigrating turned out to be fortunate for Alexander, since during this interval he was able to attend Glasgow University for a year. This was the same school in which his father had been educated. While there, Alexander Campbell studied Greek, Latin, French, "belles lettres," logic, and experimental philosophy.²³ But while his studies there were an important formative influence (and his only formal higher education), perhaps the major influence on Campbell during his stay in Glasgow was not the university courses but rather his acquaintance with several men who were involved with the religious revival or reform movement which had recently swept through Scotland. The chief leaders of this movement were two brothers, Robert Haldane (1764-1842) and James Haldane

²¹ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:98-106.

²² Ibid., 1:101-102; see also 1:148.

²³ Ibid., 1:131.

(1768-1851). Campbell became acquainted with their work primarily through Greville Ewing, a preacher in one of the Independent churches in Glasgow. Ewing befriended the Campbell family during its stay there.²⁴

Robert and James Haldane were sons of a prosperous sea captain, and both brothers went to sea themselves as young men. In later years, both underwent religious conversion experiences and became active in the promotion of Christianity. They were instrumental in organizing preaching tours and other evangelistic enterprises throughout Scotland. James took the primary active role, while Robert, who was heir to the family estate, provided the bulk of the financial backing. Their work met with considerable success among the people, but was strongly opposed by the established Church of Scotland, which looked with disdain upon the activities of such untrained laymen. In the face of this opposition, several of the leaders associated with the Haldanes organized their own church, formed along Congregational lines. The Haldanes and their followers sought to restore the doctrines, polity, worship, and practices of the apostolic church. They embraced Congregational polity because they believed this to be the pattern laid down in the New Testament. Eventually, Robert and James Haldane became convinced that believer's baptism²⁵ was the practice of the primitive church, and they both were immersed. They did not wish to see baptism become an issue in their churches, but it did, and eventually led to a division among their followers. This schism sapped the strength of

²⁴Ibid., 1:148-149.

²⁵Believer's baptism is the doctrine that baptism should be administered only to those who are old enough to make a personal profession of faith. Thus, it stands in opposition to the doctrine and practice of infant baptism.

the new movement, and it began to decline thereafter.²⁶ Greville Ewing parted ways with the Haldanes over this issue (and over some unrelated personal disagreements) but seems to have maintained a high regard for the brothers.

Alexander Campbell was greatly impressed by what he saw going on in Scotland among the Independent churches. He admired, and agreed with, their stands on several matters: their devotion to the authority of the Bible, their independent spirit, and their evangelistic zeal. He also came to appreciate their strong opposition to sectarianism. The view of faith taught by the Haldanes--that faith embraced both the understanding and the emotions, and was based on the evidence furnished in Scripture--became, in large measure, Campbell's own view. Besides Ewing and other Independents, Campbell was also influenced by preachers from other denominations while he stayed in Glasgow. He took advantage of numerous opportunities for what was then called "occasional hearing," visiting various churches and hearing different speakers.²⁷

²⁶On the Haldanes and the movement associated with them, see: Alexander Haldane, The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane, 2nd ed. (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1852). This is the only biography of the brothers, and has been reprinted many times, with occasional slight changes in the title. Most histories of the churches in Scotland make only slight mention of the Haldanes; notable exceptions are: George Yuille, History of the Baptists in Scotland from Pre-Reformation Times (Glasgow: Baptist Union Publications Committee, 1926), pp. 55-59; and Harry Escott, A History of Scottish Congregationalism (Glasgow: Congregational Union of Scotland, 1960), pp. 50-85. The restorationist elements in the Haldane's teachings are most clearly expressed in James A. Haldane, A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1805). The influence of the Haldane movement and other Scottish groups upon Alexander Campbell and the American Restoration Movement is the theme of Lynn A. McMillon's, "The Quest for the Apostolic Church: A Study of Scottish Origins of American Restorationism," Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1972. Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:147-194, discusses Campbell's contacts with the Haldane movement.

²⁷Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:188.

All of these contacts with other religious viewpoints and practices served to loosen Campbell's ties to the Seceder Presbyterians. He felt drawn to the principles espoused by Ewing and those associated with him, but at the same time, he was reluctant to break with the church of his family and of his youth. He continued in an unsettled state of mind for some time. His personal spiritual crisis came to a head when it came time for the Seceder's semi-annual communion service. He appeared before the session of the church to be examined as to his fitness to receive communion. Passing this examination, he received a token which was needed for admission to the communion service. Throughout the service, his mind was troubled, and when finally it was his turn to sit at the tables where the elements were served, he threw his token into the plate but declined to partake.²⁸ As Richardson reports, this action marked a turning point in the young Campbell's life:

It was at this moment that the struggle in his mind was completed, and the ring of the token, falling upon the plate, announced the instant at which he renounced Presbyterianism for ever--the leaden voucher becoming thus a token not of communion but of separation. This change, however, was as yet confined to his own heart.²⁹

A short time after this, the Campbell family sailed for America. They left Scotland early in August, 1809, and arrived in New York on September 29, 1809. While in Scotland, the family had not heard of Thomas Campbell's controversies in America, nor of his subsequent break with the Seceder Presbyterians. Nor had Alexander Campbell informed his father of his own state of mind. He was relieved to find that both he and his father had experienced similar changes of sentiment. As Garrison and DeGroot put

²⁸Ibid., 1:189-190.

²⁹Ibid., 1:190.

it, "They were still together, though on new ground that each had reached by a different path."³⁰

After the family was reunited and established in America, Alexander Campbell turned his attention toward preparing himself for the ministry, in accordance with his earlier decision. Having read the "Declaration and Address," he was very much impressed with it, and told his father that he was determined to spend his life promoting the principles outlined in that document. He also made a personal decision, perhaps influenced by the liberality of the Haldanes in Scotland, that he would never accept payment for his work as a minister.³¹ He embarked upon an ambitious plan of self-guided study. He preached his first sermon in July, 1810;³² at the time, he was not ordained, nor even a member of any church.

Alexander Campbell was twenty-two years old in September, 1810. He had, in the previous two years, experienced significant changes in his life. He had left his native Ireland, spent a year studying in Scotland, and faced a personal crisis in his religious life that ended with an important reorientation in his theological sentiments. Then, on arriving in America, he found that his father was involved in the promotion of a program for the restoration and unification of the churches. Alexander joined with him, and determined to devote his life to this work.

The new country that the Campbells had come to was also going through significant changes in this period.³³ Perhaps chief among these

³⁰Winfred E. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), p. 144. Richardson also describes the reunion of the family, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:219-222.

³¹Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:177, 273-275.

³²Ibid., 1:312-313.

³³For a brief overview of America in the early nineteenth century,

was the ongoing growth and shift of the population. The number of Americans had increased 25% in the decade 1790-1800, and another 25% between 1800 and 1810. The first third of the nineteenth century saw more dramatic increases; in this period the population more than doubled, from five million in 1800 to more than twelve million in 1830. The land area of the nation also more than doubled, with the acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase in 1815.³⁴

Though the centers of culture and civilization in early nineteenth-century America were generally concentrated along the eastern seaboard, the nation was looking--and moving--toward the West. In 1800, only 10% of the population lived west of the Alleghenies; by 1830, 30% did. In the Old Northwest, the population multiplied nearly thirty times in as many years--from 51,000 in 1800 to 1,400,000 in 1830.³⁵ The existence of vast, open lands on the frontier captured the imagination of many Americans, and was one element that fueled the development of a confident optimism about the future of the nation.³⁶ American historian John Mayfield has noted that, at the close of the War of 1812, the people of the United States looked forward to a new era of stability and prosperity, but in fact, what they faced was:

see Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815, The New American Nation Series (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), see chapter two, "The United States in 1801," pp. 21-44; also, John Mayfield, The New Nation, 1800-1845, rev. ed., The Making of America Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), see esp. pp. 3-21, and 43-60.

³⁴On population growth in this period, see Smelser, The Democratic Republic, p. 21; Mayfield, The New Nation, p. 6; and Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, pp. 76-77.

³⁵Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, pp. 76-77.

³⁶Mayfield, The New Nation, pp. 43-46.

an age of unprecedented change and increasing complexity. . . . The newfound security and self-confidence of the nation released pent-up energies that propelled the union into an era of rapid and unsettling social change. Americans were on the move--geographically, economically, politically.³⁷

The growing, mobile population had an unsettling effect upon many social institutions. While the barbarity and lawlessness of the frontier has often been exaggerated, it is true that as settlers moved westward, it took time for things such as churches, schools, and the machinery of local government to catch up with them, and when these institutions were established, the necessity of adapting them to the frontier environment produced important changes. The churches that were able to meet the needs of the frontier situation grew to be the largest and most widely-spread churches in America. The frontier proved to be a kind of testing-ground. Practices and ideas ill-suited to frontier conditions died out, and were replaced by others more adaptable to the situation.³⁸ The result of this process was the dominance of the three most successful frontier churches: the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians. Each of these churches had evangelistic methods, doctrines, and forms of church polity that were well suited to the frontier environment.³⁹

In addition to the westward migration and the effects of the frontier environment, another formative influence on American religion in

³⁷Mayfield, The New Nation, p. 43.

³⁸This theme of the frontier's influence on the churches (and vice-versa) was developed in many of the works of William Warren Sweet. See, for example, his "The Frontier in American Christianity," in John T. McNeil et al., eds., Environmental Factors in Christian History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939; reprint ed., Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 380, 390-391. See also, Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 96-99.

³⁹Sweet, "The Frontier in American Christianity," pp. 391-396.

the early nineteenth century was the Second Great Awakening. This religious revival began in the 1790s and extended well into the nineteenth century. The first manifestations were seen in New England, where various towns and churches experienced "refreshing showers" that brought about a renewal of piety and religious zeal. The Awakening gathered momentum as it spread to other parts of the country. In the South and West, the revival touched primarily the Baptists and Methodists.⁴⁰ Among these groups especially (but not exclusively) the frontier camp meeting proved to be a powerful evangelistic method in the cause of the Awakening. The results of the Second Great Awakening, throughout the nation, included revival or renewal among those already a part of the churches, an evangelistic thrust that succeeded in bringing in thousands of new members, and a resulting humanitarian reform impulse that manifested itself in a variety of causes throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Restoration Movement in America had its beginnings during the Second Great Awakening, and profited greatly from the impetus that the Awakening gave to evangelical religion in general.⁴¹ The Restoration Movement also benefitted from other cultural, social, and intellectual aspects of early-nineteenth century American life. In fact, in many ways the messages and practices of the Restoration Movement seemed ideally suited to the American environment. It was a time of religious restlessness and ferment, and a time ripe for new beginnings. The breakdown of the old established religious majorities made the divisions within

⁴⁰ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 387.

⁴¹ Max Ward Randall, The Great Awakenings and the Restoration Movement (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1983), attempts to describe in detail the connection between the Awakenings and the Restoration Movement. While not without some faults, it is a useful study of this subject.

American Christianity more apparent, and thus many people were ready to listen to the Restorationists' call for unity. The theme of Restoration was not unfamiliar to Americans. In fact, it was a pervasive idea in early America, and not only in religion. Historian Richard T. Hughes has argued that restoration or primitivism "was almost a common denominator of American culture during that period and had been born of the radical optimism engendered by the birth of the new nation."⁴² Hughes goes on to note:

Truly, given their intellectual heritage and the cultural and religious milieu in which the fathers [i.e., of the Restoration Movement] lived . . . it would have been a marvel had Campbell, Stone, and the others been able to avoid embracing restorationism or had they understood their work principally in terms of a sixteenth century European perspective: reform. The way of the Old World was to reform, the way of the New World was to make all things new: novus ordo seclorum. And one way to make all things new was to restore the primal forms which, for Christians, meant the apostolic traditions.⁴³

The origins of the Restoration Movement in America are to be found primarily in two religious groups on the early nineteenth-century frontier: the "Christians" associated with Barton Warren Stone, and the "Disciples of Christ" or "Reforming Baptists" led by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. There were other groups, before Stone and the Campbells, which are often cited as precursors of the Restoration Movement. These include the Republican Methodists in Virginia, led by James O'Kelly (1735?-1826), and the "Christian" movement in New England led by Elias Smith (1769-1846) and Abner Jones (1772-1841).⁴⁴ Though these groups do share some

⁴²Richard T. Hughes, "Twenty-Five Years of Restoration Scholarship: The Churches of Christ, Part I," Restoration Quarterly 25:4 (1982): 248.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁴⁴For more on these earlier movements, see Garrison and DeGroot,

restorationist traits with the movements led by Stone and the Campbells, there is no clear evidence of any organic connection between them. There was some mutual awareness, but no unity of organization.⁴⁵

The work of Barton Stone predates that of the Campbells; he had been preaching for a decade before Thomas Campbell came to America. Stone was born December 24, 1772, at Port Tobacco, Maryland. He attended school at an academy near Greensboro, North Carolina, conducted by David Caldwell. While there, he heard the well known Presbyterian evangelist James McGready at a revival meeting. Stone felt convicted of his need to seek religion, but felt no assurance of salvation. Later, at a revival meeting conducted by William Hodge, another Presbyterian evangelist, Stone was converted.⁴⁶

In 1796, Stone was licensed to preach by the Orange Presbytery in North Carolina. Later that year, he became the minister for two congregations in Bourbon County, Kentucky. After he had preached there for some time, these two congregations, Cane Ridge and Concord, extended a formal call to Stone, to become their regular minister. Accepting this call entailed the necessity of formal ordination for Stone. As he studied in preparation for his ordination examination, he began to have some doubts about the teachings of the Westminster Confession, and about the very concept of allegiance to man-made creeds. At his examination, when he was asked, "Do you receive and adopt the Confession of Faith, as containing

The Disciples of Christ, pp. 85-92; McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 53-57; and James D. Murch, Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), p. 32.

⁴⁵Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, p. 92.

⁴⁶John Rogers, The Life of Elder Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself, With Additions and Reflections (Cincinnati: J. A. and U. P. James, 1847), pp. 1, 6-11. (Hereafter cited as Rogers, Life of Stone). The most recent biography of Stone is William Garrett West, Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954).

the system of doctrine taught in the Bible," Stone replied, "I do, as far as I see it consistent with the word of God."⁴⁷ There being no objection to this rather unorthodox answer, Stone was ordained; however, this incident prefigures later developments in Stone's life.

In August, 1801, one of the most famous of the great camp meetings associated with the Second Great Awakenings took place at Cane Ridge, and Stone was involved with it from the beginning. Thousands of people were present, and several preachers spoke simultaneously from platforms situated in various spots around the grounds.⁴⁸ It was Stone's participation in the Cane Ridge revival that eventually led to his separation from the Presbyterian denomination. After the revival was over, two Presbyterian ministers, Richard McNemar and John Thompson, were charged with teaching "dangerous doctrines" and with cooperation with ministers from other denominations in connection with the Cane Ridge meetings. Both McNemar and Thompson were tried before the presbytery for heresy. Stone and two other ministers, Roger Marshall and John Dunlavy, joined together in protesting this trial. Eventually, all five of these ministers renounced their connection with the Synod of Kentucky, and in 1803, they formed their own organization, the Springfield Presbytery. But within ten months, the Springfield Presbytery had voted to dissolve itself--Stone and the other leaders had come to doubt the necessity or the scriptural warrant for such extra-congregational organizations. The disbanding prompted the writing of "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery."

⁴⁷Rogers, Life of Stone, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁸For Stone's first-hand account of the Cane Ridge meeting, see Rogers, Life of Stone, pp. 37-42.

Stone was probably its primary author, and it represents perhaps his most important early writing.⁴⁹

After the demise of the Springfield Presbytery, the churches associated with Stone and his fellow ministers (for most of their congregations had gone with them in the departure from the Synod of Kentucky) existed as independent, congregationally governed bodies. They used simply the name "Christian" to designate themselves. Evangelistic activity and the planting of new churches brought rapid growth to this "Christian" movement,⁵⁰ though not without problems. One of the greatest problems was the defection of the leadership. Of the five men who had originally withdrawn from the Synod of Kentucky, only Stone remained in the independent movement throughout his life. McNemar and Dunlavy were converted to Shakerism about 1805, and led many of their followers off with them. About 1811, Marshall and Thompson rejoined the Presbyterian church.⁵¹ Since only Stone was left, he was naturally looked to for leadership. When he began publishing his periodical, The Christian Messenger, in 1826, it served to spread his ideas and further enhanced his role as a leader. The strength of the Christian movement was centralized in Kentucky and Ohio. By 1830, there were several thousand followers of Stone in this region. In the decade of the 1820s, these Christians heard more and more about a somewhat similar movement origination in western Pennsylvania--the Disciples of Christ.

⁴⁹The complete text of the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery" can be found in Rowe, ed., Pioneer Sermons and Addresses, pp. 7-13, and also in Young, Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union, pp. 19-26.

⁵⁰In the remainder of this chapter, the movement associated with Stone will be referred to simply as "Christian(s)," and the movement led by the Campbells will be designated "Disciples of Christ," or "Disciples."

⁵¹Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, p. 122.

This group was the outgrowth of the Christian Association of Washington, the origins of which have been described above.

Thomas Campbell was the guiding force behind this movement, and his "Declaration and Address" spelled out some of the principles it was founded upon. Shortly after Alexander Campbell came to America, he began to eclipse his father as the leader of the movement that formed around them, but since the younger Campbell was so impressed with the contents of the "Declaration and Address," and devoted to spreading these ideas, a closer look at this document is in order.

A strong emphasis throughout the "Declaration and Address" was the desirability of the unity of all Christians. Along with this went an abhorrence of division among Christians.⁵² Thomas Campbell saw division as resulting from two things: 1) neglecting or ignoring the authority of scripture, and 2) replacing or augmenting scripture with articles of faith devised by men. He felt that much of the controversy in the religious world could be avoided if such man-made creeds were abolished.⁵³ In contrast to the divisions so evident throughout Christendom, Thomas Campbell expressed his ideal of what the church should be:

That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.⁵⁴

⁵²Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington," in Rowe, ed., Pioneer Sermons and Addresses, pp. 39, 42. All citations to the "Declaration and Address" are to this edition.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 39-41.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 39.

One of the greatest hindrances to this kind of unity was the use of non-Biblical standards or creeds as tests of fellowship. Thomas Campbell recognized the place for expedients; scripture did not speak to every situation. But he believed such expedients should clearly be recognized as matters of opinion, and not used as standards in the church to include those in agreement and exclude others. To avoid divisions caused by these man-made standards or tests of fellowship, he proposed:

Nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the Word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church Constitution and management, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament church, either in express terms or by approved precedent.⁵⁵

To Thomas Campbell, the solution for the divisions in the church was to go back to the New Testament church--back behind the centuries of human additions and inventions which had brought about division. Campbell believed that Christendom could be united upon a biblical basis. The adoption of the principles spelled out in the "Declaration and Address," he believed, would lead to a union of all Christians, and then the united church could get on with the task of evangelism. In Thomas Campbell's thought, unity was not an end in itself, but a practical necessity for the church, so that it could carry out its mission of evangelizing the world.⁵⁶

When the Christian Association was organized, it was only intended to be a society for the promotion of Christian unity and renewal. But after a time, adherents of the association began to find themselves in an unusual situation, especially as opposition to them began to arise in some

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 102-104.

of the churches. They soon found that they could not continue in this manner for long. In May, 1811, the Association voted to constitute itself as an independent, congregationally governed church. Thomas Campbell was elected elder, and Alexander Campbell was licensed to preach. This church came to be known as the Brush Run church, named for its location on Brush Run Creek, near West Middleton, Pennsylvania.⁵⁷

The Brush Run church manifested several restorationist traits. James D. Murch, using records from the church and sermons that Alexander Campbell preached there, concluded that the members of the Brush Run church held the return to the Bible alone as the rule of faith and practice to be a major objective. They believed that churches should be independent and autonomous, locally governed by elders and deacons. They denied a distinction between the clergy and laity. The church observed the Lord's Supper each Sunday, believing this to have been the apostolic practice.⁵⁸ After June, 1812, when Alexander Campbell became convinced that believer's baptism by immersion was the practice of the early church, the Brush Run congregation adopted this practice as well.⁵⁹

With the adoption of immersion as the exclusive form of baptism, the early Disciples of Christ differentiated themselves from most of the denominations around them. But while this increased opposition from some parties, it brought the Disciples into closer relations with the Baptists. The Brush Run congregation was not exactly like a Baptist church, but it

⁵⁷ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:366-367.

⁵⁸ Murch, Christians Only, pp. 51-52.

⁵⁹ The details of how Alexander Campbell came to adopt believer's baptism and immersion, and to reject infant baptism, are described in Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:391-405.

had more in common with Baptists than it did with any other religious body. In September, 1815, the Brush Run church was admitted to membership in the Redstone Baptist Association, an organization with constituent churches in the southwestern Pennsylvania area.⁶⁰ This began a connection with the Baptists that was to last for a decade and a half. However, it was always a rather tenuous relationship. Campbell's followers did not regard themselves as merged indistinguishably with the Baptists, and they still maintained their own sense of identity and mission.⁶¹

In the decade from 1810-1820, Alexander Campbell emerged as the leader of the Disciples, or Reformers (they called themselves by both names). In the early days, it was not much of a movement, in terms of size. For several years, the Brush Run church was the only separate congregation espousing the Campbells' ideas; there were scattered individuals among other churches, mostly Baptist, in eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Thomas and Alexander Campbell were the only preachers in the new group.

Though the young movement was small, how can Alexander Campbell be said to be the leader of such a loosely-defined, unorganized assemblage? To complicate the question, the early Restorationists were not simply un-organized, they had a positive distrust for any kind of ecclesiastical structure. Radically congregational, they recognized no authority beyond that of the local body of believers. Yet, Campbell did emerge as the leader. He did so by the persuasive force of his arguments, and his visibility among the adherents of the movement. His debates with a variety

⁶⁰ McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 120.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 120-121; Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, pp. 161-163.

of religious figures in the years 1820-1843 attracted much publicity and gave wide currency to his name.⁶² Following the publication of his first debate, Campbell was impressed with the power of the written word and began the publication of a monthly journal, the Christian Baptist. It soon grew to a wide circulation, and carried Campbell's views to subscribers every month. Besides the debates and the publishing venture, Campbell also made frequent preaching tours, displaying a forceful eloquence in the pulpit, and these also kept him in touch with the people.

Alexander Campbell's preaching, publishing, and debating made him well known and attracted a significant number of followers to the Restoration Movement, but the preeminent evangelist of the first generation Restorationists was Walter Scott (1796-1861).⁶³ Scott was born in Moffat, Scotland, and was educated at the University of Edinburgh. In 1818, he came to America, and for a few years he taught school in various places. He moved to Pittsburgh sometime in 1819, and worked as a teacher in an academy run by George Forrester. Forrester, besides teaching school, was also the preacher for a small congregation that was similar in its practices and beliefs to the Haldane movement in Scotland. Scott became a member of this congregation. George Forrester died in a drowning accident

⁶² Campbell's five major debates were: with John Walker, a Seceder Presbyterian minister, in Mount Pleasant, Ohio, June, 1820; with William L. Maccalla, a Presbyterian minister, in Washington, Kentucky, in October, 1823; with the Scottish social reformer Robert Owen, in Cincinnati, Ohio, in April, 1829; with John B. Purcell, the Roman Catholic bishop of Cincinnati, in that city, in January, 1837, and with Nathan L. Rice, a Presbyterian minister, in Lexington, Kentucky, in November, 1843.

⁶³ The best recent biography of Walter Scott is Dwight E. Stevenson, Walter Scott: Voice of the Golden Oracle (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946; reprint ed., Joplin, MO: College Press, n.d.).

the next year (1820), and Scott took his place as minister to the church. When Alexander Campbell visited Pittsburgh in the winter of 1821-1822, he became acquainted with Scott. Campbell's ideas about primitive Christianity and its restoration appealed to Scott, and he became a co-worker in the cause.⁶⁴

Scott's greatest contribution to the Restoration Movement was the formulation of a systematized evangelistic method. He took the formal, complex logic of the Campbells and put it into a form that would "preach,"--that would be understood and appreciated by the masses. He proved to be a forceful, effective evangelist. Alexander Campbell had started a church at Wellsburg, Ohio, and this congregation subsequently joined the Mahoning Baptist Association.⁶⁵ The Mahoning Association took in most of northeast Ohio. Walter Scott moved to Steubenville, Ohio, in 1826 and also became associated with the Mahoning Baptist Association. In August, 1827, the association appointed Scott as an evangelist to work in the region. Scott accepted, and took to the work immediately, and met with great success. However, as he preached the gospel as he understood it, he also spread Restorationist ideas. Increasingly, the Mahoning Baptist Association became more "Campbellite" and less Baptist. In August, 1830, having become so thoroughly Restorationist as to doubt the scriptural sanction for extra-congregational associations, the Mahoning Baptist

⁶⁴ McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 129-130.

⁶⁵ When Campbell became a member of the Wellsburg congregation, he was no longer within the boundaries of the Redstone Baptist Association. It was a timely move--there was at the time considerable opposition to him among the Redstone Association, and a move was afoot to remove him from their fellowship. See Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:68-70.

Association dissolved itself.⁶⁶ With that act, the fragile alliance of the Restoration Movement and the Baptists was terminated,⁶⁷ although the separation of the two groups was actually a process carried out over a period of several years.

The separation of Campbell's group from the Baptists set the stage for the subsequent union with Stone's Christian movement. During the 1820s, these two restorationist groups became increasingly aware of one another. As both expanded, they often moved into the same new territories. For example, a number of preachers in the Christian movement belonged to the Mahoning Baptist Association.⁶⁸ When groups of Campbell's followers left Baptist churches and began forming their own congregations, they often found that there was already a "Christian" church in the same area. This was particularly true in Kentucky and Ohio, where both groups had considerable strength, but also in Tennessee.⁶⁹ When two such congregations existed in the same locality, having a great deal in common, it was natural that the possibility of uniting began to be discussed.

Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell first met in 1824, at Stone's home in Georgetown, Kentucky. Campbell was on a three-month preaching tour of Kentucky at the time. The two men seemed to have a mutual respect for one another, and the work each was doing. They were aware of the similarity of their programs and their aims. In his autobiography, Stone tells of his early acquaintance with Campbell:

⁶⁶McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 144.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 136-137, 144.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 132.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 147.

When he came into Kentucky, I heard him often in public and in private. I was pleased with his manner and matter. I saw no distinctive feature between the doctrine he preached and that which we had preached for many years, except on baptism for the remission of sins. Even this, I had once received and taught, as before noted, but had strangely let it go from my mind, till brother Campbell revived it afresh. . . . In a few things I dissented from him, but was agreed to disagree.⁷⁰

In the matter of uniting the Christians and the Disciples, the followers were often moving ahead of their leaders. The first actual merger of a Disciples and a Christian congregation appears to have been in Millersburg, Kentucky, in April, 1831.⁷¹ This was several months before Campbell and Stone even began their exchange of correspondence on the subject of union.

Beginning in late 1831, Campbell and Stone published an exchange of letters between themselves in their journals.⁷² They discussed some of the issues on which there were differences between the two movements, and explored approaches to union. Their discussions of differences sometimes became quite heated. Campbell was reluctant to grant that Stone's movement had in any way preceded or antedated his own in restoring the "ancient order of things."⁷³ All in all, Stone was much more favorable and enthusiastic about union than Campbell was; if the matter had been left

⁷⁰ Rogers, Life of Stone, pp. 75-76.

⁷¹ Alonzo Willard Fortune, The Disciples in Kentucky (n.p.: The Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky, 1932), pp. 115-116.

⁷² See Barton Stone, "Union," Christian Messenger (hereafter, CM) 5:8 (August 1831):180-185; Alexander Campbell, "Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," Millennial Harbinger (hereafter, MH) 2:9 (September 1831):389-396; Stone, "Remarks on A. Campbell's Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," CM 5:10 (November 1831):248-257; A. Campbell, "The Christian Messenger," MH 2:12 (December 1831):557-558.

⁷³ Alexander Campbell, "Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," MH 2:9 (September 1831):390; see also, Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Messenger," MH 2:12 (December 1831):180.

entirely to Campbell, the union might never have taken place. Both Stone and Campbell recognized that an invisible union already existed between their groups, but Stone was interested in seeing a visible, formal union. Campbell, although he desired this as well, had doubts about how such a union could be achieved.⁷⁴

The Disciples of Christ and the Christians had much in common. Though there were also some significant differences, the two groups were able to unite because, on the whole, their similarities outweighed the differences. These areas of agreement serve to show some of the doctrinal distinctives of the Restoration Movement, because some of the areas in which they agreed are also the most striking things that differentiated them from other groups.

Both the Disciples and the Christians were aspiring to bring about Christian union by a restoration of the New Testament church. Neither of these ideas--union or restoration--was new, but the combination of them was uncommon. Virtually all Christian groups desired union, and there had been many restorationist movements in the church's history, but usually these two goals had been at cross purposes, for restoration often tended to be divisive. But Stone and the Campbells intended to attain unity by going back to the doctrines and practices taught in the Bible. Actually, the theme of restorationism is most prominent in the work of the Campbells, and Stone's emphasis was more on unity.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Stone, "Union," CM 5:8 (August 1831):180, and "Remarks on A. Campbell's Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," CM 5:10 (November 1831):249; cf. A. Campbell, "Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," MH 2:9 (September 1831):395.

⁷⁵ McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 148.

The Disciples and the Christians were also in agreement on the idea of liberty of opinion in the church. Both advocated the abandonment of human creeds as tests of fellowship in the churches. They believed that the central authority of the church should be scripture. Creeds and human explanations of scripture could lead to divisions. Stone and the Campbells advocated freedom of conscience in areas where the scriptures do not speak conclusively.

To both Christians and Disciples, baptism was to be administered only to penitent believers, and both groups saw baptism as directly related to the remission of sins. As time went by, they were also increasingly agreed in practice on immersion as the only proper mode of baptism. The doctrine of baptism taught in the Restoration Movement set them apart from many other religious bodies. They were similar to the Baptists in their insistence upon believer's baptism by immersion, but unlike them in their teaching that baptism was for the remission of sins.

Their understanding of the nature of faith was another area that set the Disciples and Christians apart from other religious bodies. In contrast to many other theological positions at that time, Stone and Campbell both saw faith as belief of the evidence presented in scripture. It was not a miraculous gift from God. Thus, one did not have to wait until he or she received faith in order to accept the gospel. When one believed the facts presented in scripture, one was ready to become a Christian. Therefore, the Restorationists baptised believers upon a confession of faith, without requiring an examination or a narration of a conversion experience, as was the practice in many churches.

In the later 1820s and early 1830s, adherents of the Campbell and Stone movements began to become aware of one another and to explore the

possibility of union. The similarities in their aims, teachings, and practices, noted above, provided the grounds for this union. Naturally, in such loose confederations as both the Christians and the Disciples were, union could not be by an official act of a denominational headquarters. There were no leaders in either group with the power or authority to make those kinds of decisions. Since both groups were congregational in polity, unity could only be a process by which individual congregations came to accept those of the other group as fellow members in the same body.

Although one must keep in mind that the union of these two groups was a process accomplished over several years, the date often assigned to this unification is January, 1832. In that month, Christians and Disciples from several congregations met in Lexington, Kentucky, and declared themselves united. Of course, due to the autonomous nature of the churches in each group, this action actually involved only the congregations represented there. But the sentiment for union was present in both groups, and soon similar unions took place in many other areas. Stone commented on the after-effects of the Lexington meetings, "The Spirit of union is spreading like fire in dry stubble."⁷⁶

The main figures involved in the meetings at Lexington were Barton Stone, and John Rogers, both from among the Christians, and John Smith and John T. Johnson, prominent Disciples in Kentucky. Alexander Campbell was not there, but later expressed approval of the meeting, although with some reservations. Those meeting at Lexington decided to send forth two

⁷⁶Stone, "Union of Christians," CM 6:1 (January 1832):7. For more information concerning the background of the Lexington union meetings, and subsequent developments, see Murch, Christians Only, pp. 110-114; Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, pp. 212-214; McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 151-155.

representatives, one from each body, to ride among the churches and urge the cause of union. The two men chosen for this were John Smith and John Rogers. Their combined efforts met with considerable success.⁷⁷

The union was not accomplished overnight, and not without considerable problems. There were those who simply would not go along; a considerable number of the followers of Stone remained aloof and eventually formed their own body.⁷⁸ In other places, misunderstandings and suspicions caused delay in the process of union. But over a period of time, the two movements coalesced into one. It is not possible to point to a precise date for this unification, but by 1840 the union was virtually complete.

The period following the merger of the Christians and the Disciples saw a remarkable growth in the united movement. There may have been as many as 20,000 members in the two groups around 1830--8,000-10,000 Christians and 10,000-12,000 Disciples. Over the next thirty years, the membership increased at least eightfold. In 1860, there were approximately 190,000 to 200,000 adherents of the Restoration Movement.⁷⁹ This rate of growth was almost four times the rate of population growth. Since general population growth does not explain this increase, and since the Restoration Movement, being an indigenous American group, did not gain much from

⁷⁷On the work of Smith and Rogers, see McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 153-154; Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, pp. 212-214.

⁷⁸An undetermined number of Stone's followers stayed out of the union and eventually formed the General Convention of the Christian Churches. This body united with Congregationalists in 1931 to form the Congregational Christian Churches. In turn the Congregational Christian Churches joined together with the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1957 to become the United Church of Christ. See McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 154.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 154-155.

immigration, the main cause of this growth was evangelism. The labors of Smith and Rogers to unite the two bodies developed into a sustained evangelistic campaign, and there were many other evangelists in the field as well. To the leaders of the Restoration Movement, this period of successful evangelistic growth was an affirmation of the beneficial effects of their union. For example, Robert Richardson pointed to the lesson to be learned:

Multitudes were added to the churches . . . and an impetus was given to the cause by the union of the two people, which served to illustrate the overwhelming power which the gospel would exert upon the world if, in like manner, all the sad divisions of Protestantism could be healed.⁸⁰

Barton Stone, who was sixteen years older than Alexander Campbell, died in 1844. After Stone's death, Alexander Campbell became the pre-eminent leader in the united Movement, which was, through the years 1830-1860, growing into one of the major religious groups in America. Though Campbell was only one of several significant early figures, his leadership was undoubtedly the major influence upon the Restoration Movement in its formative years.

⁸⁰ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:387.

CHAPTER THREE

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S VIEWS ON CHURCH-STATE ISSUES

Alexander Campbell's thought on matters relating to the relationship of church and state can be broken down into two broad categories. On the one hand, there are certain basic principles to which he held fairly consistently throughout his life. On the other hand, the positions he took on particular issues--the ways in which he sought to apply these foundational principles--show some flexibility over the course of his career. The general contours of his thought, in this area as in many others, took shape early in his life and were greatly influenced by his intellectual and religious background. The more detailed development of his views came about as a result of his later life experiences.¹ This investigation of Campbell's views on church-state matters will begin with a discussion of the basic foundational elements in Campbell's thought, and then proceed to examine the positions he took on specific issues.

One of the basic principles that Campbell² consistently held to throughout his life was the ideal of the separation of church and state. Lunger succinctly summed up his views in this regard: "Campbell gloried in

¹Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), p. 264. (Hereafter cited as Lunger, Political Ethics).

²Since there will be few references to Thomas Campbell or other family members in this and succeeding chapters, the name Campbell, used alone, will henceforth refer only to Alexander Campbell.

the American tradition of separation of church and state and in the constitutional guarantees of religious liberty."³ For the most part, this advocacy of church-state separation was not based upon the Constitution of the United States or upon the American political tradition, but upon his own view of the church. To Campbell, the church was a voluntary and autonomous society which was to be kept pure of the contamination that might result from close ties to the state.

Campbell was concerned about encroachments upon the principle of church-state separation from both sides, but he feared the actions of many of the churches more than he did the actions of the state. He believed that some churches opposed religious establishment only as a matter of political expediency; given the chance, he believed, the Roman Catholic church, the Episcopal church, or the Presbyterian church would seek to establish their own denomination in America just as they had in Europe.⁴ As Lunger notes, "His greatest concern seems to have been to prevent religious bodies from securing public funds to advance sectarian interests."⁵ In line with this, Campbell opposed government funding or assistance to church-supported colleges. When the legislature of Kentucky debated a bill to establish a university at Danville, Kentucky, and turn the administration of it over to the Presbyterian synod of Kentucky, Campbell's ire was aroused. He thundered:

I believe that the legislature of Kentucky understands the principles of republican government, of civil and religious liberty, better than to create or incorporate universities, and then to give them into the hands of any number of clergy, how intelligent and

³Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 48-49.

⁴Campbell, "Reply to Charles Cassedy, Esq., No. III," Millennial Harbinger (hereafter, MH) 4:9 (September 1833):469.

⁵Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 50.

virtuous soever, for the purpose of subordinating them to a religious aristocracy.⁶

Campbell even opposed the incorporation of local congregations. He believed that incorporation would allow churches to legally compel people to pay the pledges that they had made to the church. Legal incorporation of churches, he said, was "the best substitute for a religious establishment in this country, and in a certain degree has answered all the purposes."⁷

Another constant principle in Campbell's thought on church-state relations was his belief that religious liberty is a natural right, not one which governments could grant or deny. To Campbell, for citizens to ask their rulers for toleration in religious matters implied more authority than the rulers actually possessed. In 1826, he wrote in the Christian Baptist:

The mere asking for toleration recognizes a right which no civil government possesses, and establishes a principle of calamitous consequences, viz. that opinions contrary to the majority, or the national creed, are a public injury, which it is in the power of government to punish or tolerate, according to their intelligence and forbearance. Civil rulers have no right to tolerate or punish men on account of their opinions in matters of religion.⁸

In a similar vein, Campbell argued that none of the "natural rights" of man could be conferred: "There can be no favor, donation, or gift in conferring natural rights upon others; for natural rights cannot

⁶ Campbell, "A Presbyterian University at Danville, Ky.!!," Christian Baptist (hereafter, CB) 2:7 (February 1825):136. See also, Campbell, "Reply to the above," (concerning Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky), CB 2:10 (May 1825):205-210, esp. p. 206; Campbell, "Chartered College and Legalized Priestcraft: Or, Notes on an Oration," CB 4:1 (August 1826):12.

⁷ Campbell, "Acts of Incorporation," CB 4:1 (August 1826):17.

⁸ Campbell, "Reply" (to a letter from a reader), CB 3:9 (April 1826):183.

be conferred; they belong to man merely because he exists."⁹ Campbell also saw a clear connection between religious liberty and other civil liberties. As early as his debate with John Walker (1820), he stated: "There is nothing more congenial to civil liberty, than to enjoy an unrestrained, an unembargoed liberty of exercising the conscience freely upon all subjects respecting religion."¹⁰

Developments that seemed to threaten freedom of religious expression also concerned Campbell greatly. One such issue was the legal controversy about a Baptist minister who had immersed a young woman, a minor, without her father's consent. The judge who heard this case determined that the preacher's action was an illegal interference with parental authority. Campbell was deeply disturbed by the implications of this case and devoted over twenty pages of the March 1843 Millennial Harbinger to a discussion of it. As Campbell saw it, "In this important case principles are involved deeply affecting liberty of conscience, personal responsibility, and religious freedom, matters of transcendent importance to every American citizen."¹¹ The strong endorsement of parental authority in the judge's decision, Campbell said, "annihilates personal responsibility, the rights of conscience, and political freedom, at 'one fell swoop.'"¹² Clearly, Campbell saw the case as a dangerous interference with the

⁹Campbell, "Preface to Volume VII," CB 7:1 (August 1828):4.

¹⁰Alexander Campbell, ed., A Debate on Christian Baptism, Between Mr. John Walker, a Minister of the Secession, and Alexander Campbell, 2nd ed. (Pittsburgh: Eichbaum and Johnston, 1822), p. 182. (Hereafter, Campbell-Walker Debate).

¹¹Campbell, "Review of Judge Lewis' Decision of the Case of the Commonwealth vs. William Armstrong," MH, New Series, 7:3 (March 1843):97.

¹²Ibid., p. 109.

liberty of conscience. A year later, he noted with some satisfaction that another judge, in a similar case, had issued a ruling more in line with his own opinions.¹³

Throughout his career as a religious leader, Campbell consistently opposed organized political activity by churches. His enthusiasm for Christian individuals involving themselves in the political process varied with time and circumstances, but there does not seem to be any instance in which he urged or favored the concerted activities of churches in pursuit of political goals. Part of his opposition to churches becoming involved in politics stemmed from his advocacy of freedom in matters of opinion. The belief that the church should not make matters of opinion into tests of fellowship tended to keep many political issues out of the pulpit and the life of the early Disciples' churches because politics touches upon many areas in which there does not appear to be a clear biblical mandate.

Perhaps the clearest (and most extreme) example of Campbell's belief that politics fell within the realm of opinion was his position on slavery. While he personally condemned slavery as it existed in America, he could find nothing in the New Testament that specifically condemned the master-slave relationship, per se. Therefore, he did not believe that Disciples congregations could or should excommunicate slaveowners. In 1845, noting the fact the religious bodies all around them were dividing over the slavery issue, Campbell reminded his followers of the principle of freedom of opinion, and pleaded, "We are the only religious community

¹³Campbell, "Notice to Correspondents," MH, Third Series, 1:6 (June 1844):238.

in the civilized world whose principles (unless we abandon them) can preserve us from such an unfortunate predicament."¹⁴

Campbell also opposed organized political activity by churches because he did not believe it was proper to try to legislate Christian morality, or to impose Christian standards upon non-Christians. He believed that just as any earthly king's laws are binding only upon his subjects, so the laws of the kingdom of God pertain only to its citizens.¹⁵ In 1833, he wrote in the Millennial Harbinger that the New Testament was adapted to a situation where Christians were in a suffering state--not to circumstances where Christians were in power. Christianity, then, "can never mount the throne, nor become a court religion; and therefore any religion called Christian, which has been by law established, has been an impudent imposition or base counterfeit, and not the religion of Jesus Christ."¹⁶ To Campbell, the church and the state were two different spheres, and, at present, Christ was not the political or governmental head of the state. This meant that Christianity was not compatible with organized political activity. In connection with the slavery issue, Campbell said:

The State is the world, not the church. The Church cannot constitutionally undertake to reform the State. It may seek to convert the citizens; but can never assume, by any political expedients, to reform the State. As American citizens, we may be Free Masons, Odd Fellows, Pro-Slavery men, or Abolitionists; but as Christians we cannot be any one of these. . . . Each individual state has

¹⁴ Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," MH, Third Series, 2:2 (February 1845):51. Campbell's position on slavery will be examined further below, pp. 90-93.

¹⁵ Campbell, "Extra on the Kingdom of Heaven," MH 5:9 (August 1834):410.

¹⁶ Campbell, "The Everlasting Gospel, No. II," MH 4:3 (March 1833):120.

made laws for itself. The United States have made laws for themselves. Jesus Christ has made laws for neither of them.¹⁷

To Campbell, Christ was the head of the church, but was not presently the ruler of the nations in a literal sense (Christ would be ruler when the Millennium commenced). In his "Address on War" in 1848, Campbell returned to this theme:

The most enlightened of our ecclesiastic leaders seem to think that Jesus Christ governs the nations as Cod governed the Jews [i.e., as Cod governed the Jews in the Old Testament theocracy]. They cannot separate, even in this land, the church and the state. They still ask for a Christian national code.

If the world were under a politico-ecclesiastic king or president, it would, indeed, be hard to find a model for him in the New Testament. Suffice it to say that the church, and the church only, is under the special government of our Christian king. The nations, not owning Jesus Christ, are disowned by him, he leaves them to themselves, to make their own institutions, as Cod anciently did all nations but the Jews.¹⁸

Campbell believed that the route to social reform was through the conversion of individuals, not through organized political activity by Christians. This was a fairly common attitude in his times, and remains so among certain segments of Christendom. Campbell believed that the gospel of Christ, applied to every area of life, would root out all social evils. In 1836, when he was assailed for not "coming out" in favor of abolitionism, he replied that he did not wish to narrow his approach:

I choose rather to direct my energies to the root of the tree; while others who can handle the axe or the saw better than the mattock, delight in lopping off the branches. I wish them all success who oppose any religious, moral, or political evil; but I do not think it my duty to devote myself to any one branch of evil or to any one branch of virtue.¹⁹

¹⁷Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," MH, Third Series, 2:3 (March 1845):108.

¹⁸Campbell, "Tracts for the People--No. XXVI--An Address on War," MH, Third Series, 5:7 (July 1848): .

¹⁹Campbell, "Abolitionism," MH 7:6 (June 1836):282.

Throughout his career as a religious editor, speaker, and leader, Campbell consistently maintained a public neutrality concerning party politics. Lunger believes that Campbell leaned toward being a Jacksonian Democrat in his younger days, but later became disillusioned with the Jacksonians. By the late 1830s, Lunger argues, Campbell was a Whig.²⁰ Robert Richardson, Campbell's co-worker and biographer, notes one instance in which (in a private conversation) Campbell expressed a personal preference for a presidential candidate--the Whig candidate William Henry Harrison, in 1840.²¹ Perhaps more significant than these simple facts is the way in which they must be ferretted out--Campbell never made his personal political affiliations known publicly, and he took pride in his "impartiality." In 1846, he made this claim in the Millennial Harbinger:

As for politics, no one could ever say, from anything inscribed upon our pages, whether we had any partisan politics at all, or whether we belonged to any political party in our nation. On my late tour in Missouri, I was gravely asked by a constant reader, to what political party I belonged. He confessed he never could decide from the Harbinger whether I was a Whig or Democrat. I did not enlighten him very much on the subject. I stated that there were certain principles and policies to which I sometimes gave my suffrage, but that neither parties nor men were worshipped by me with any blind devotion.²²

To summarize the above discussion of the consistent elements in Campbell's thinking on church-state issues, there appear to be four basic principles which he held to throughout his career. These include:

- 1) a strong advocacy of the separation of church and state; 2) firm

²⁰ Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 139-141.

²¹ Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated, 2 vol. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1897, two-volumes-in-one reprint of original edition published 1868, 1869), 2:642ff.

²² Campbell, "Impartiality of the Editor of the Harbinger," MH, Third Series, 3:1 (January 1846):4.

support of the natural right of religious liberty and free expression of religion; 3) opposition to concerted political activity by churches; and 4) a public stance of neutrality in regards to party politics or the endorsement of individual candidates.

Before examining Campbell's views on specific church-state issues, it might be worthwhile to note his general attitude toward civil government and the American political system. Over the years, Campbell experienced several changes in his attitude towards America's government and politics. Throughout his early career, until 1830, Campbell held a basically positive view of these institutions. When he first came to America, he had the typical immigrant's enthusiasm for the new land, and this did not seem to diminish for the succeeding two decades.²³

But while Campbell expressed positive views of the American system until the late 1820's, the period from 1830-1846 was, as Lunger labeled it, a time of "disillusionment and despair."²⁴ Perhaps the most important factor in bringing on this disillusionment was Campbell's personal experience as an elected delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention, which met in Richmond in late 1829 and early 1830. Prevailed upon by many in his region to stand as a candidate, Campbell did and, being elected, took his place among the assembled delegates when the convention opened in Richmond on October 5, 1829.²⁵

²³ See, Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:204-214, and 1:465-466, for descriptions of Campbell's early impressions of and enthusiasm for America.

²⁴ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 130. Lunger traces the ups and downs of Campbell's enthusiasm for American politics and government in considerable detail, see pp. 130-138.

²⁵ Richardson details Campbell's campaign for this position, see Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:305-310.

Garrison and DeGroot record that, when Campbell announced his candidacy for the convention, he was criticized by some "for turning from heavenly things to follow the path of worldly ambition in politics."²⁶ His defense against this charge was that he wanted to be a member of the convention so that he might do something about ending slavery in Virginia. But in this desire, he was frustrated. In fact, at the convention, he never once spoke on the subject of slavery. The anti-slavery faction at the convention realized that political power in the state was going to remain in the hands of the slave-owning aristocracy. They determined to allow nothing to be incorporated into the new constitution that would give any support to the perpetuation of slavery, but they simply did not have the political power to do anything positive about ending slavery in the state.²⁷

Though Campbell spoke often in debate, and is described as having taken a "prominent part" in the convention,²⁸ it is probably fair to say that he was not one of its prime movers or leaders. As already noted, the real power in the state was with the eastern slave-holding regions; Campbell was on the weaker side in most of the contested issues. Some of Campbell's opponents in the convention were among the most prominent politicians of the times: former Presidents James Madison and James Monroe, and United States Chief Justice John Marshall. Since these eminent men represented eastern interests, they were usually found

²⁶ Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), p. 199.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 199. Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 75-104, details Campbell's activities at the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

in opposition to the positions that Campbell took.²⁹ But they did not ignore Campbell. Lunger describes Campbell's contribution to the convention in this way: "As a debater and orator Campbell seems to have made quite an impression. His ideas were not particularly unique, but he had a colorful personality and a forceful way of speaking, which compelled his opponents to take note."³⁰ Richardson records that after the convention, James Madison "spoke in very high terms of the ability" that Campbell had shown at the convention, although Madison went on to say, "But it is as a theologian that Mr. Campbell must be known. It was my pleasure to hear him very often as a preacher of the gospel, and I regard him as the ablest and most original expounder of the Scriptures I have ever heard."³¹

Lunger refers to one particular debate that Campbell was involved in, and it merits note in connection with the subject of this thesis. There was a clause in the proposed constitution that prohibited compulsion in any matters of religion, and also prohibited any religious tests for citizens or office holders. This section concluded with the proviso: "Provided, however, that the foregoing clauses shall not be so construed, as to permit any minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination, to be eligible to either House of the General Assembly."³² When the convention debated this part of the constitution, a move was made to strike out the proviso which prohibited ministers from holding office. Those in favor

²⁹ Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, p. 200.

³⁰ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 80.

³¹ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:313.

³² Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 99-100, citing, Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Convention, of 1829-30, to Which Are Subjoined the New Constitution of Virginia, and the Votes of the People (Richmond: Ritchie and Cook, 1830), p. 53.

of the prohibition argued that ministers were a peculiar and privileged order--they were licensed to preach, and were exempted from military duty, and therefore they should not be allowed to serve in the legislature. Campbell argued that the same objections applied to justices of the peace, yet nobody contended for excluding them. Lunger records that Campbell was one of fourteen who voted to eliminate this prohibition; evidently, with only that few opposed, it was incorporated into the new constitution.³³

As noted above, Campbell had been criticized by some for being involved in the Constitutional Convention. Even afterward, he apparently still felt some need to justify his participation. In February, 1830, immediately after returning from the convention, he wrote to William Tener, a friend in Londonderry, Ireland. He said, in part:

But you may ask, What business had I in such matters? I will tell you. I have no taste or longings for political matters or honors, but as this was one of the most grave and solemn of all political matters, and not like the ordinary affairs of legislation, and therefore not incompatible with the most perfect gravity and self-respect, I consented to be elected, and especially because I was desirous of laying a foundation for the abolition of slavery (in which, however, I was not successful), and of gaining an influence in public estimation to give currency to my writings, and to put down calumnies afar off that I was not in good standing in my own State.³⁴

Evidently, Campbell believed that participation in the more ordinary political realm, as a candidate or office holder, might not have been consistent with his Christian profession or his ministerial calling. But he believed the constitutional convention was an extraordinary event, a chance to do something above and beyond the normal political realm, and he saw his attendance at the convention as not only consistent with his

³³Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 100.

³⁴Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:319-320.

ministry, but as something that might actually enhance his reformatory work. Lunger, commenting on this letter to Tener, remarks: "This is quite consistent with his general position. As a constitutionalist and believer in government by laws rather than by men, he felt at liberty to help debate and determine the fundamental principles of government, even though he kept aloof from partisan politics."³⁵

Campbell made no detailed references to his participation at the convention in the pages of his journals. The Christian Baptist was in its last year of publication at the time of the convention, and the Millennial Harbinger was just beginning--in fact, its first issue, January 1830, was delayed a month by Campbell's absence at the convention.³⁶ But in passing remarks he did make about the convention, one can see his disillusionment. In an article on "Religious Controversy" in the first issue of the Millennial Harbinger, he made the following comments:

A little experience will convince the most astute that the clearness and force of argument will not subdue opposition. It very frequently provokes the greater resentment. The adversaries of the Messiah are proof of this. So were the aristocrats in the late Virginia Convention. Orpheus could, by his music, have easily have caused the oaks to follow him, as could the republicans, by their arguments and demonstrations, have caused the oligarchs in power to consent to extend equal rights and immunities to the proscribed casts [sic] in this commonwealth.³⁷

Nearly a year later, Campbell made another reference to the convention. In a discussion of proposed systems of education, he referred back to an educational plan he had proposed at the convention. He commented.

³⁵ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 77.

³⁶ Campbell, "Notice," MH 1:1 (January 1830):48. Publication of the CB and the MH overlapped for a few months. The CB ended with the July, 1830 issue, but Campbell wanted the MH volumes to run with the calendar year, so he started publication of it in January, 1830.

³⁷ Campbell, "Religious Controversy," MH 1:1 (January 1830):43.

But there were few ears in that body disposed to hear a word upon the subject. It was a scramble for power. It was not what system of arrangements, what constitutional provisions will make the happiest population; but how shall we of the East retain our dominion over the West; and how shall we of the West obtain that equal share of power in the government to which we are, in justice, entitled? This question, like Pharoah's ill-favored kine, devoured every thing, fat or well-favored, which appeared in the convention.³⁸

Campbell's close association with the political process, in his attendance at the Constitutional Convention, clearly seems to be a case where familiarity bred contempt. But it was not the only cause of his disillusionment and despair concerning government and politics. Lunger cites several other factors. One was the actions by which the government of Georgia violated the treaty rights of the Cherokee Indians. Campbell saw this incident as a simple case of the strong plundering the weak. The reaction of the Virginia legislature to the Nat Turner insurrection was another disappointment to Campbell. He had hoped that such a crisis would provoke a powerful response to the slavery issue--he advocated the colonization of freed slaves. But the legislature did nothing other than "eloquent speeches." Lunger also notes that certain continuing trends in American politics and society upset Campbell. Among these were the increasing intensity of partisan strife in politics, the "spoils" system of political patronage, a growing spirit of insubordination among young people, and the problem of violence and lawlessness. All of these caused his faith in and enthusiasm for the American system to dissipate.³⁹

Campbell's writings from the period 1830-1846 clearly show this

³⁸ Campbell, "Incidents on a Tour to Nashville, Tennessee, No. 1," MH 1:12 (December 1830):554.

³⁹ See Lunger's summary of these issues, Political Ethics, pp. 130-134.

disenchantment with the political process.⁴⁰ In the midst of this despair, he became increasingly negative toward Christian involvement in the political process. Perhaps his "low point" in this regard was reached in an essay in the September, 1840, Millennial Harbinger. He posed the question, "Ought Christians to take an active part in politics--in the present politics of this country?" He went on to respond:

This is a question of as easy decision as it is of great moral importance. I am decidedly of the opinion that they ought not. One of my reasons is, American politics are full of avarice and ambition. . . . Nor can there be any thing in its spirit and character more opposite to the spirit and genius of Christianity than the cultivation and display of concentrated selfishness.

The present politics of this country are more purely mercenary than any other politics in any other country, or than the former politics of our own country. . . .

The spirit of politicians and the spirit of God are as antagonistic as flesh and spirit, as hatred and love, as heaven and hell; and he that would faithfully and truly serve the one, must adjure all allegiance to the other. 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' This is but one of many reasons why Christians cannot take an active part in the politics of the present day. Would to God that they would set their affection on the politics of heaven, and leave the politics of earth to those who cannot soar above the Alleghany Mountains.⁴¹

When these negative comments from the period 1830-1846 are compared with Campbell's attitude toward the American system after 1847, a remarkable contrast emerges. Beginning in 1847, one finds that Campbell was again enthusiastic about American politics and government. The immediate cause for this renewed optimism was probably a trip to Europe which Campbell took in 1847. Seeing America's democracy in a new light,

⁴⁰ See, for example, Campbell, "A Hint to the Faithful," MH 4:10 (October 1833):520-521; "Letters to England--No. X," MH, New Series, 2:10 (October 1838):472-474, and "Morality of Christians--No. XXI--Politics," MH, New Series, 4:9 (September 1840):413-415.

⁴¹ Campbell, "Morality of Christians--No. XXI--Politics," pp. 414-415.

contrasted with European society, renewed his optimism.⁴² One of the clearest demonstrations of the change in Campbell's attitude toward American government and politics is to compare his remarks concerning two trips to Washington--the first in 1839, during his time of disillusionment, and the second in 1850, after his hopes were renewed. On the first occasion, he reported that he had not spoken in public while in Washington: "I have never spoken the word of the Lord in Washington. Among other reasons, one is--that I know nothing more antipodal to the gospel than politics. . . ."⁴³ He went on to remark that, in spiritual terms, the national capital, and the several state capitals, "are the most dry and barren grounds in all the country."⁴⁴ But when Campbell visited Washington in 1850, he took advantage of an opportunity to speak in the House of Representatives chambers on Sunday, June 2, 1850. He spoke for an hour and a half, to what he described as "an audience as attentive, and apparently as much interested and absorbed, as any congregation I have had the honor recently to address."⁴⁵ On the next day, Campbell spent three hours in the visitor's gallery of the Senate chambers, which he described as "so replete with wisdom and eloquence," and where he was able to see and hear "the great men of the day--some of them, indeed, the greatest statesmen of the world. . . ."⁴⁶

⁴² Richardson described Campbell's trip to Europe in detail, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:542-573. Lunger discusses the impact this trip had on Campbell's views of America, Political Ethics, pp. 134-135.

⁴³ Campbell, "Incidents of a Tour to the South," MH, New Series, 3:1 (January 1839):8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Campbell, "Excursion to Baltimore and Washington City," MH, Third Series, 7:7 (July 1850):406.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 407.

Clearly, by the late 1840's, Campbell had a much more positive, enthusiastic attitude about American government and the political system than he had previously. What caused this marked change? I would agree with Lunger that the trip to Europe was probably one of the most important factors. Lunger also believes that another reason for Campbell's change of attitude was his fear that the American system could be so easily destroyed. He believed that the slavery crisis threatened the existence of the nation, and he also was alarmed by the rising influence of the Roman Catholic Church in America due to the large numbers of Catholic immigrants coming to the United States.⁴⁷ Lunger comments: "Campbell's revived enthusiasm for American democracy was thus born partly of love and partly of fear--partly from seeing democnrcacy in a new light against the background of European society, and partly from the fear that, with all its shortcomings, it might be destroyed and worse evils follow."⁴⁸

There is another, and perhaps more important, reason why Campbell responded more favorably to the American system in the latter period of his life. Whereas he had earlier placed all of his hopes for the renewal of the social order in the church, and more specifically, in the Restoration Movement, as time went on he began to recognize the existence and the value of a "common religion" in America--an American civil religion.

In Campbell's time, millennial fervor was in the air. Many were anticipating the dawn of the millennium in the not-too-distant future. The millennium would usher in a new age, and a new social order--universal justice would be secured, tyranny would end, and the Christian faith would

⁴⁷Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 137. Campbell's attitudes towards Catholicism will be discussed below, pp. 96-99.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 138.

advance and triumph over all the earth. Campbell, although he was always on guard against extremism in regard to date-setting about the millennium, shared this anticipation of the new age. But Campbell's millennialism went beyond passive anticipation. He earnestly believed that his movement to unite all of Christendom in a restored New Testament church was a vital factor in working toward the dawn of the millennium. He believed it was necessary to restore and unite the church because such unity was a prerequisite for the emergence of the new millennial order. He wrote in the Christian Baptist in 1825 that, "Just in so far as the ancient order of things, or the religion of the New Testament is restored, just so far has the Millennium commenced, and so far have its blessings been enjoyed."⁴⁹

While the expectation of the millennium was a common theme in early nineteenth-century America, Campbell's millennial views were somewhat different than the more prevalent ideas. As Richard T. Hughes, professor of history at Abilene Christian University, has pointed out in a perceptive essay on Campbell's relationship to civil religion, most American Protestants of that period believed that the dawn of the millennium was contingent upon the spread of both the Christian religion and American social and political institutions. Campbell was different in that he thought the dawn of the millennium was dependent upon the

⁴⁹ Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 1," CB 2:7 (February 1825):136. For other examples of Campbell's linking the success of the Restoration Movement with the coming of the millennium, see: Campbell, "Address to the Readers of the Christian Baptist," CB 5:11 (June 1828):260-263; Campbell, "Preface to Volume VII," CB 7:1 (August 1829):6-7; and Campbell, "Millennium--No. 1," MH 1:2 (February 1830):55. The best summary of Campbell's millennial views is found in Robert Frederick West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 163-217. See also Lunger's discussion of Campbell's millennial views, Political Ethics, pp. 53-57.

success of the Restoration Movement.⁵⁰

As Hughes notes, as the years went by, this theme never entirely disappeared from Campbell's writings, but it did receive less emphasis.⁵¹ Hughes contends that Campbell, when he saw that his movement was not going to succeed in uniting Christendom at any early date, began to move toward the more common Protestant view of the millennium--that the world would be "millennialized" as it was "Americanized," by the spread of American social and political institutions. Hughes argues:

As Campbell increasingly lost faith in a radical restoration of the primitive church to produce ecclesiastical and societal unity, he at the same time was increasingly experiencing the national unity, equality, and pluralism secured not by his own preachments of primitive Christianity, but rather by the Deistically inclined 'theology of the Republic.'⁵²

It is clear that Campbell, in the period of his returning enthusiasm for American democracy, did begin to recognize, and exult in, an American civil religion, although "common religion" is the term he used to describe it. In his 1854 "Address on Colleges," Campbell argued that America had a common religion established by law; not in any particular forms of worship, but in certain aspects of the American system--such as the administration of oaths in God's name, and the appeal to God by various organs of government in the course of their deliberations. Moreover, this was not simply a theistic civil religion--Campbell believed there was a still more specific recognition of the Christian religion in the fact that the law required all governmental and most secular business to cease on Sunday,

⁵⁰ Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 44:1 (March 1976):87-88.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 99, see footnote number 90.

⁵² Ibid., p. 96.

and in the laws concerning marriage, incest, adultery, and other matters.⁵³

Hughes cites several other examples from Campbell's writings that show a shift toward acceptance and support of the concept of a common religion.⁵⁴

If Campbell did, in his later years, begin to embrace civil religion (and the evidence shows that he did), then this is an important factor in explaining his change to a more positive view of American governmental and political institutions.

Campbell's attitudes towards government and politics in the last few years of his life are difficult to determine. By 1860, his age was beginning to take a toll on him, and his public activities were increasingly curtailed. Lunger notes that, "By the year 1860 his writings showed unmistakable signs of age and the weakening of his intellectual penetration."⁵⁵ Most of the scholars who have studied Campbell agree with this assessment.⁵⁶ D. S. Burnett, a contemporary and co-worker of Campbell's, spoke in a memorial address of an "almost imperceptible decay" in Campbell's intellectual powers over the course of the last several years

⁵³ Campbell, "Address on Colleges," in Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, p. 297.

⁵⁴ Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion," pp. 96-100. Another valuable study of Campbell and civil religion is Mont Whitson, "Campbell's Post-Protestantism and Civil Religion," West Virginia History 37:2 (January 1976):109-121.

⁵⁵ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 260.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), p. 200; David Edwin Harrell, Jr., A Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Vol. I: Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866 (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. 149 (hereafter cited as, Quest for a Christian America); Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, describes Campbell's "declining years," 2:632-676, *passim*.

of his life.⁵⁷ In 1864, Campbell resigned as editor of the Millennial Harbinger, but the bulk of the editorial work had been handled by co-editors for a number of years previous to this.⁵⁸

The coming of the Civil War disturbed Campbell greatly. It seems to have brought with it one final disillusionment concerning Campbell's attitude toward government.⁵⁹ The Millennial Harbinger officially took a pacifist stance and, in fact, the war was not mentioned prominently in its pages.⁶⁰

This survey of the variations in Campbell's attitude toward American government and politics has shown three trends in Campbell's thought over the course of his life. Until 1830, he manifested positive views concerning America, its government, and its political system. But beginning in the early 1830s, one sees definite signs of a disillusionment setting in, and this phase lasted until 1847. In that year, Campbell's trip to Europe sparked anew his admiration for all things American. From that time, until the eve of the Civil War, his enthusiasm for America was strong and abiding. With the coming of the Civil War, the aged and infirm Campbell seems to have once again lost hope in the worth of all human systems of government.

Having described the basic principles that underlay Campbell's thinking on church-state issues, and his general attitude toward politics

⁵⁷ Cited in Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 260.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 259; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, p. 149.

⁵⁹ Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 259-262; Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion," p. 101.

⁶⁰ Both Lunger and Harrell make this assessment: Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 259; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, p. 150.

and government, it is now possible to turn to a consideration of the positions he took on some of the church-state issues of his day. Though controversies over church-state matters were relatively rare in the early nineteenth century (as compared to more recent times), there were several significant ones. The positions Campbell took in these cases were often complex, and not without some inconsistencies. One of his chief concerns was to keep political issues from disrupting the unity of the Restoration Movement.

Agitation over the issue of slavery touched nearly every aspect of life in antebellum America, and religion was no exception. Actually, of course, slavery was much more than a "church-state" issue, but the slavery crisis had definite consequences for the relationship between church and state. Campbell was personally opposed to slavery, but his major concern was to keep the issue from dividing the Restoration Movement. Why did he allow concern for Christian unity to override any real effort to address the problem of slavery? His millennial views, discussed above, provide an aid in understanding him on this point. He believed that if the Restoration Movement could succeed in uniting Christendom in a restored New Testament church, then slavery, as well as very other social evil, would be swept away with the dawning of the millennium.

Campbell himself had owned a few slaves at times. Some may have been inherited with the farm given to him by his father-in-law. At other times he bought slaves with the intention of freeing them at a later date. But by 1845, he could write, "I have set free from slavery every human being that came in any way under my influence or was my property."⁶¹

⁶¹Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," MH, Third Series, 6:6 (June 1845):259.

Campbell's position on slavery was open to much misunderstanding. Depending on when and where they quoted from his writings, both anti-slavery and pro-slavery forces could cite him as a friend or a foe. In his earliest statements on the subject, Campbell was strongly anti-slavery, although he never could have been classified as an abolitionist. References to slavery were rare in the Christian Baptist, but in the very first issue he pointed to the inconsistency of those "christians who are daily extolling the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and at the same time, by a system of the most cruel oppression, separating the wife from the embraces of her husband, and the mother from her tender offspring. . . ." ⁶² In the "Prospectus" for the Millennial Harbinger, Campbell announced that one of the subjects to be dealt with in the new journal was "Disquisitions upon the treatment of African slaves, as preparatory to their emancipation, and exaltation from their present degraded condition." ⁶³

As to the actual mechanics of ending slavery, Campbell was a gradualist and favored colonizing the free blacks in Africa or elsewhere. He held to this position long after it had been repudiated by most anti-slavery forces. As late as 1851, Campbell still maintained that, "the only rational--that is, practicable--way of abolishing slavery in America, if it can ever be done, is that proposed by the American Colonization Society." ⁶⁴

Campbell had little to say on slavery in the pages of the Millennial Harbinger from 1832 until 1845. In that latter year, he began to

⁶² Campbell, "The Christian Religion," CB 1:1 (August 1832):18.

⁶³ Campbell, "Prospectus," MH 1:1 (January 1830):1.

⁶⁴ Campbell, "Queries on Master's Duties," MH, Fourth Series, 1:9 (September 1851):529-530.

treat the subject extensively again. This time he was reacting to the extremism of the abolitionists. He published a series of essays entitled "Our Position to American Slavery," which ran through eight installments in the early issues of that year. This series was his most extensive treatment of the slavery issue. Basically, his position throughout was that the master-slave relationship, per se, was not "in itself sinful or immoral." Nevertheless, slavery as it existed in America, in the nineteenth century, was "inexpedient." But, because the New Testament recognized the master-slave relationship, no Disciples congregation "can constitutionally and rightfully make the simple relation of master and slave a term of Christian fellowship or a subject of discipline."⁶⁵

When Campbell first began to speak out on slavery, in the early 1830s, pro-slavery people were offended. But after this series of essays, anti-slavery partisans and abolitionists attacked Campbell, claiming he was a friend to slavery. The simple fact is that Campbell was neither pro-slavery nor abolitionist. He was personally convinced that slavery as it existed in America was wrong. Although he accepted, and repeated, many of the common pro-slavery arguments (i.e., that the Bible sanctioned slavery), he never advocated slavery as a positive good. He continuously strove to avoid both the "pro-slavery" and the "abolitionist" labels. He consistently advocated a colonization scheme to put a gradual end to slavery in America. But having said all this, it is still useful to note the assessment made by Disciples historians Lester McAllister and William Tucker, that, "Without question, the welfare and unity of Disciples were

⁶⁵ Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," MH, Third Series, 2:6 (June 1845):263.

more important to Campbell than either the amelioration or eradication of slavery."⁶⁶

Perhaps the area in which the slavery issue most certainly came within the purview of church-state issues involved the question of civil disobedience and the Fugitive Slave Law. In 1850, Congress passed this statute, making it illegal to harbor or aid anyone attempting to escape from slavery. Many Christians in the North argued that obedience to a "higher law" would lead them to disobey this. In 1851, Campbell wrote a series of essays urging compliance with the law, basing his argument mostly on the thirteenth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, where the Christian's duty to obey the government is discussed. Campbell dismissed the idea of civil disobedience; it had no connection with this issue, he declared, because slavery was sanctioned by scripture, and therefore not wrong, per se. Therefore, Campbell found nothing morally objectionable to compliance with the Fugitive Slave Law.⁶⁷ There was a great deal of reaction to this series of essays. Campbell reported that the mail from his readers ran about fifty-fifty, for and against his call for compliance.⁶⁸

Did Campbell attain his goal, to maintain the unity of the Restoration Movement, and avoid a division over slavery? Historians of the Movement are still debating that question. Though there was no open

⁶⁶McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 194.

⁶⁷Campbell wrote a dozen essays dealing with the Fugitive Slave Law in the period of January-November, 1851. However, the fundamental points of his arguments in regard to it can be found in the first of these: "The Fugitive Slave Law," MH, Fourth Series, 1:1 (January 1851): 27-33.

⁶⁸Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law," MH, Fourth Series, 1:3 (March 1851):171.

schism at the time, some scholars have argued that divisions that happened later in the Movement's history are actually a result of the sectional tensions that go back to, and are a part of, the slavery crisis and the Civil War.⁶⁹ But, for Campbell's lifetime at least, the informal organic unity of the Movement was preserved.

Though no other issue in the pre-Civil War era had as significant consequences for both the churches and the state as did the slavery crisis, there were nevertheless many other church-state issues in this period, and Campbell occasionally devoted his attention to these. Education was a perennial concern with Campbell. He had a fairly well-developed educational philosophy, the details of which are beyond the scope of this study.⁷⁰ But most significant here is his advocacy of teaching the Bible and the Christian religion in the public schools. Though in most cases, he strongly opposed any church-state ties, he apparently saw no

⁶⁹ The first actual open division in the Restoration Movement was not until 1906, when leaders in the non-instrumental Churches of Christ asked the U.S. government to list their group separately in census listings. Yet, some historians see this division as a culmination of the earlier sectional/slavery crisis. This, in short, is Harrell's thesis in Quest for a Christian America, see pp. 133-138. McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, pp. 207-208, tend to agree with Harrell; they even suggest that there was open division in the 1860s. Carrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, p. 330, held to the traditional view that neither slavery nor the Civil War divided the Disciples. This author tends to agree with Leroy Garrett, who contends that inherent problems with the idea of restorationism, and not social tensions, eventually led to divisions within the Restoration Movement. See Garrett, The Stone-Campbell Movement (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981), p. 523.

⁷⁰ For a more detailed look at Campbell's educational philosophy, see Lunger, Political Ethics, pp. 167-178; see also, Perry E. Gresham, "Alexander Campbell--Schoolmaster," in Perry E. Cresham, ed., The Sage of Bethany: A Pioneer in Broadcloth (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1960), pp. 9-23. Campbell made many references to education in his writings, but a good feeling for his views can be had by reading four of his essays, all of which are in his Popular Lectures and Addresses. See: "Education," pp. 230-246; "On Common Schools," pp. 247-271; "Address on Colleges," pp. 291-310; and "Essay on the Importance of Uniting the Moral With the Intellectual Culture of the Mind," pp. 453-483.

inconsistency in his insistence that the public schools include the study of the Bible in their curriculum. This no doubt reflects his appreciation for America's "common religion," which he identified as a kind of generic Protestantism. Campbell was opposed to any kind of sectarianism, but he did not believe that the Bible was a sectarian book. He felt it was possible, and indeed necessary, to teach the Bible and basic Christian doctrines in the schools, free from the particular creeds or interpretations of any sect.⁷¹ In October, 1837, Campbell attended the meeting of the College of Teachers in Cincinnati (this organization was an assembly of teachers and other people interested in education, not an educational institution). The conferees debated a resolution which stated, "That, in the judgement of the College, the Bible should be introduced into every school, from the lowest to the highest, as a school book; only without denominational or sectarian comment."⁷² In reporting on his attendance at this meeting, Campbell referred to this resolution, and pointed out that the words italicized here were his own amendment. The resolution, as amended, was passed unanimously.⁷³ Also at this meeting, Campbell presented an address, "On the Importance of Uniting the Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind,"⁷⁴ in which he spelled out his ideas on the necessity of strong moral teaching in the schools.

⁷¹ Campbell, "Address on Colleges," in Popular Lectures and Addresses, pp. 309-310; Campbell, "Address on Education," *ibid.*, pp. 324-326. See also S. Morris Eames, The Philosophy of Alexander Campbell (Bethany, West Virginia: Bethany College, 1966), p. 80.

⁷² Campbell, "The Month of October," MH, New Series, 1:12 (December 1837):568.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ This address is in Popular Lectures and Addresses, pp. 453-483.

It is not difficult to see how Campbell's ideas about teaching the Bible and the "common" elements of the Christian faith tied in with his growing appreciation for America's civil religion. Campbell was convinced that if the prominent Christian facts, stated plainly in the Bible and acknowledged by all Christendom, were taught in the schools, then "we, as a nation and people, shall stand among the nations of this earth great and happy and powerful. . . ." ⁷⁵ Hughes, in his essay on Campbell and civil religion, cites this same passage from Campbell's "Address on Colleges," and then makes this comment: "In this way, the school, for Campbell, had assumed the traditional catechetical function of the established church, and the content to be taught was, as Campbell supposed, America's common religion." ⁷⁶

Campbell's educational aims and philosophy were not only related to his understanding of America's common or civil religion, but also to his view of Roman Catholicism in America. Like many Protestant churchmen of his era, Campbell feared the rising influence of the Roman Catholic Church, brought on by immigration from the Catholic nations of Europe. Although he never became a rabid anti-Catholic, Campbell did perceive Catholicism as a threat, and he believed that universal education was the greatest safeguard against this threat.

One of the first references to Roman Catholicism in the Millennial Harbinger (there were virtually none in the Christian Baptist) was in August, 1832, when Campbell reprinted a negative sketch of the Jesuits that had recently appeared in a new edition of Pascal's letters. The

⁷⁵ Campbell, "Address on Colleges," p. 310.

⁷⁶ Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion," p. 98.

introductory remarks that Campbell made clearly indicate the nature of the threat as he saw it: "We are of the opinion that the Jesuits have mediated the establishment of the Catholic religion in these United States, and that their plan is now in progress."⁷⁷ In February, 1835, he strongly stated the threat again. Catholicism and the slavery crisis were, he said, the two crises which "may, and in all probability will, dash the American ship upon a rock, and engulf us all in one common ruin." But he proposed an "ark of safety" against the Catholic threat: "That ark is UNIVERSAL EDUCATION--education patronized, sustained, guarded, and controlled by the state. Enlighten all, Catholic and Protestant."⁷⁸

It was at least in part the educational issue that led to the debate between Campbell and John B. Purcell, the Roman Catholic bishop of Cincinnati. At a meeting of the College of Teachers in Cincinnati in October, 1836, one of Campbell's speeches drew strong criticism from Purcell.⁷⁹ Purcell and Campbell disputed the relative contributions of Catholicism and Protestantism to civilization. Finally, the two agreed to meet in debate to discuss the points of contention more fully. The debate, which was held in January, 1837, attracted wide publicity. Most of the discussion focused on theological issues, but the final proposition (which Campbell had originally proposed as the first to be discussed)

⁷⁷ Campbell, "History of the Jesuits," MH 3:8 (August 1832):397.

⁷⁸ Campbell, "Education--No. 2," MH 6:2 (February 1835):66.

⁷⁹ It should be noted that this is not the same meeting of the College of Teachers referred to previously; this meeting was held a year earlier than the one discussed above. Campbell's debate with Purcell was published as A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion Between Alexander Campbell, Bethany, Va., and the Right Reverend John B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: J. A. James, 1837; reprint ed., St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, n.d.).

dealt more specifically with the threat that Catholicism posed to America:

The Roman Catholic religion, if infallible and insusceptible of reformation, as alleged, is essentially anti-American, being opposed to the genius of all free institutions and positively subversive of them.⁸⁰

To sustain this point, Campbell argued that no Catholic could be a good citizen of the United States, since his loyalty would be divided, because he gave allegiance to a "foreign prince." Purcell argued from history that Catholics had indeed been good American citizens. But as historian David Edwin Harrell, Jr., has concluded, "The two men never really came to grips with one another on the proposition. . . ." Yet the confrontation was significant, for, as Harrell contended, "at its conclusion, Alexander Campbell was probably the most widely known anti-Catholic in the West."⁸¹

Yet, while Campbell became noted as an opponent of Catholicism, it is also true that he never became a thorough-going nativist. As social ethicist Harold Lunger observed in his study of Campbell, "It is apparent that he did not swallow whole the charges and insinuations of the more rabid anti-Catholics."⁸² At times, Campbell would express his fears about the "Catholic threat" and his dissent from the nativist extremists, in the same context. In February 1835, he spoke of his great concern about the possibility of a Catholic majority developing in America, which, he believed, would endanger American political and religious freedoms. Yet he

⁸⁰ A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, p. viii. See also Campbell's original list of the propositions to be debated in "Roman Catholic Discussion," *MH* 7:12 (December 1836):554.

⁸¹ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, pp. 216, 217.

⁸² Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 155. For a complete discussion of nativism and its relationship to the Restoration Movement, see: Richard E. Lessner, "The Imagined Enemy: American Nativism and the Disciples of Christ, 1830-1925," Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1981.

disassociated himself from those who advocated limitations on Catholic immigration:

Yes, says one, let our government prevent their migration hitherward any more--then down goes our temple of equal rights and our boasted indifference to all political concerns in religion. We cannot place Catholics under disabilities. If they swear allegiance . . . they must be citizens, and eligible to all honor and political office."⁸³

In a later essay that same year, Campbell again warned that the Roman Catholic Church sought to establish itself in the Mississippi Valley, yet, at the same time, he dissented from the "alarmists, agitators, and panic makers," and their "fierce denunciatory and vindictive spirit."⁸⁴

For all his concern about conspiracies and threats, Campbell's assaults on Catholicism were most often couched in theological terms, not social or political ones. Overall, his anti-Catholicism, while deep-seated and firm, was not strident, nor did it lead him into the position of advocating limitations of the social, political, or religious rights of Roman Catholics.

Certain issues concerning private morality and personal behavior also attracted Campbell's attention. One of the first controversies that Campbell became involved in, in the context of church-state issues, concerned the problems raised by the moral societies that were organized in many localities in the early part of the nineteenth century. There were usually local groups formed for the purpose of suppressing vice and various forms of public immorality, such as profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, and gambling. In some areas, these groups worked to pass laws against such practices, while in other places they functioned

⁸³ Campbell, "Education, No. 2," MH 6:2 (February 1835):65.

⁸⁴ Campbell, "Popery in America," MH 6:9 (September 1835):410-411.

more or less as organized bands of informers. In certain regions, the moral societies gained considerable strength, and became forces to be reckoned with.⁸⁵

For several years, Campbell apparently took little notice of the activities of the moral societies. By this time (c. 1815), he was living in Wellsburg, Virginia, and there were no active moral societies in that area. But he was acquainted with the activities of the Washington, Pennsylvania, Moral Society because his parents lived near there. At first, he hesitated to get involved with the controversy over the societies because it did not directly affect him. But as the societies grew more bold, and interfered more with the civil liberties of individuals, Campbell decided to do something. In April, 1820, he published a letter in a local newspaper, under the pseudonym "Candidus," in which he criticized the activities of the societies. This article, which provoked many negative responses, was the first of many that Campbell wrote on this subject, over the course of a two year period. As in much of Campbell's early writing, biting satire and a strong sense of the ironic were two of his most effective weapons. Though no full copies of these letters are readily available, Richardson traces the development of this controversy in some detail.⁸⁶

In the "Candidus" articles, Campbell argued that the moral societies were "anti-evangelical, anti-constitutional, and anti-rational." When opponents questioned his right to make judgments about the societies,

⁸⁵For a discussion of the moral societies on a national scale, see Charles R. Cole, The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860 (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), pp. 96-131; and Anson Phelps Stokes, Church and State in the United States (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950):2:3-42.

⁸⁶Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:522-537.

he claimed the same right that they invoked to judge the behavior of others. The societies were anti-evangelical because nothing in Scripture gave any warrant or authority for them. They were anti-constitutional because they interfered with the individual's rights of conscience (as, for example, when they sought to enforce Sabbath legislation, though not everyone held Sunday to be the Sabbath). They were anti-rational because they acted upon a dubious kind of logic--that fining men for their vices could make them moral.⁸⁷

Since the moral societies sought, among other things, to enforce the strict observance of the Sabbath, these two issues naturally were connected. By the early nineteenth century, there was considerable laxity in observance of the Sunday Sabbath, though many areas had long had Sunday observance laws. As the moral reformers began to rekindle interest in this issue, one of their chief targets became the transportation and delivery of the mails on Sundays. As historian Charles C. Cole has noted, the Sunday mails issue "became the rallying cry for the entire Sabbatarian movement."⁸⁸

The controversy over the Sunday mails issue began in 1810, when Congress passed legislation requiring post offices to be open on every day that mail bags were received. Congress was flooded with petitions calling for an end to Sunday movement of the mails. The issue was before Congress for several years, with little change in the situation. More fuel was added to the flames when, in 1825, Congress enacted a new law

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1:522-528.

⁸⁸ Cole, Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, p. 106; see his discussion of this whole issue, pp. 105-109. Stokes discussed the Sunday mail controversy in some depth, see Church and State in the United States, 2:13-20.

requiring all post offices where mail was received on Sunday to be open the entire day. Once again, public response was great. Petitions and remonstrances poured in and, in the Senate, these were turned over to the committee on post offices and post roads. In January, 1829, the committee's majority report was published. The author of this report was Senator Richard Johnson, a Democrat from Kentucky (and later vice president under President Martin Van Buren, 1837-1841). Johnson was personally acquainted with Campbell; his brother, John T. Johnson, was one of the most prominent leaders of the Disciples movement in Kentucky. Johnson recommended that the Senate reject all proposals for ending Sunday mail deliveries; acceptance of such demands would amount to an establishment of the Christian religion. The rights of those who did not hold Sunday to be a holy day had to be respected. The report also posed the question that, if the precedent of governmental support for certain aspects of a particular religion were once laid down, where would it lead? All in all, Johnson's report was a strong affirmation of the concept of the separation of church and state.⁸⁹

Campbell reprinted Johnson's report in the April, 1829, issue of the Christian Baptist. His high regard for it can be seen from his introductory comments: "The following report is rational, politic, and in the spirit of our constitution. It is one of the ablest state papers on the question, we have ever read. It cannot be resisted by good logic or sound policy."⁹⁰ Campbell approved of the document so enthusiastically because it agreed so precisely with his own sentiments.

⁸⁹ Cole, Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, p. 107.

⁹⁰ Campbell (untitled introductory remarks to Johnson's report), CB 6:9 (April 1829):213. The reprint of Johnson's report follows, pp. 213-218.

Campbell opposed Sabbath legislation for many of the same reasons that he opposed the work of the moral societies, but he also had theological grounds for opposing Sunday observance of the Sabbath. Because of his strict New Testament restorationism, he rejected the idea that the Jewish seventh day Sabbath had somehow been transferred to the first day of the week, the Christian day of worship. To him, the issue was clear; the Sabbath was a Jewish institution and therefore had no direct application to Christians.⁹¹ He also showed some concern for the rights of religious minorities. He posed the question to one opponent: "And what would you have Congress to do for the Jews [and] the Sabbatarians, who regard the seventh day as holy to the Lord?--pass no act of Congress for them because they are too few in number!"⁹²

The temperance campaign, like the Sabbath controversy, was originally one of the concerns of the moral societies, but it took on a life of its own in the mid-1820s. Ahlstrom calls the temperance movement "the first of the great moral crusades" that emerged from the era of revivals.⁹³ Beginning in various areas on the local level, the drive against drunkenness became a national movement in 1826, with the organization of the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance. In the

⁹¹On Campbell's views of the Sabbath issue, see: "Address to the Readers of the Christian Baptist---No. III," CE 1:7 (February 1824): 127-133; "To Mr. Eli Bailey, Editor of the Seventh Day Baptist Magazine," CE 3:1 (August 1825):22-24; "The First Day of the Week is not the Seventh Day," MH 5:9 (September 1834):465-466.

⁹²Campbell, "Reply to Mr. Waterman," MH 5:5 (May 1834):215.

⁹³Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 426. On the temperance movement nationwide, see Cole, Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, pp. 117-124, and Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 167-168.

1830s, the national organizations involved became more radical; instead of promoting temperance, total abstinence became the standard. In 1836, the American Temperance Union was formed in Boston, on a platform of total abstinence.⁹⁴

Harrell traces the course of the temperance drive among the adherents of the Restoration Movement, and suggests that by 1830, most of its leaders were firmly committed to total abstinence. Prior to 1840, there was some question about whether moderate use of alcohol should be made a matter of church discipline, but after that date, most churches, at least in theory, required total abstinence as a condition of membership. Yet, even then there was no unanimity of opinion on the propriety of Christians being involved in temperance societies.⁹⁵

Campbell himself took this somewhat ambiguous stance: a firm advocate of temperance, he was nevertheless suspicious of the temperance societies. He wrote in 1835:

We have always and uniformly borne our testimony in favor of temperance, righteousness, benevolence, and the co-operation of all christians and christian churches in the grand enterprize of converting the world; but at the same time we have borne our testimony against Temperance Associations, Missionary Societies, and every other human institution opposed to the honor, dignity, and usefulness of the Christian institution.⁹⁶

On various occasions, from 1835 into the 1850s, Campbell responded in the Millennial Harbinger to reader's queries about alcoholic beverages and their sale and use. He counseled discipline by churches against members who habitually used or sold "ardent spirits." If after being duly

⁹⁴ Cole, Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, pp. 119-120; Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 426.

⁹⁵ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, pp. 176-180.

⁹⁶ Campbell, "Temperance Associations," MH 6:9 (September 1835):388.

admonished, one continued the use of such beverages, he or she should be excluded from the church.⁹⁷ After Maine passed the nation's first state-wide prohibition law in 1846, Campbell urged his readers to support similar laws in their own states.⁹⁸

The reason Campbell opposed the temperance societies, when he was obviously very much in favor of the same goals they were seeking, was that he thought that such movements implied a lack of effectiveness in the church, which he was not willing to acknowledge. In an 1835 essay, he noted that to him, the church served as a temperance, missionary, and education society, and that Christians were to do their work of reform through the auspices of the church. Cooperation of Christians with such associations interfered with the "nature and design" of the church, he believed.⁹⁹ He was also wary of such enterprises because they brought Christians into "a sort of religious community with infidels and the enemies of true piety."¹⁰⁰ A better course, he advised, might be to avoid any cooperation other than "the force of good example and an unfaltering testimony against popular vices."¹⁰¹

Issues such as those raised by the moral societies, the Sabbath controversy, and the temperance campaign dealt primarily with matters of

⁹⁷See, Campbell, "Query," MH 6:2 (February 1835):86; "Queries," MH, Fourth Series, 1:3 (March 1851):172-173; "Queries," MH, Fourth Series, 2:6 (June 1852):341.

⁹⁸Campbell, "Temperance and the Maine Law," MH, Fourth Series, 3:10 (October 1853):575.

⁹⁹Campbell, "Temperance Associations," MH 6:9 (September 1835):392.

¹⁰⁰Campbell, "Temperance," MH, New Series, 6:4 (April 1842):169-170; quote on p. 170.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 170.

personal behavior. Other issues, such as war and capital punishment, posed more profound philosophical and theological questions. Campbell was a consistent pacifist, opposed to all kinds of war, but he favored capital punishment. This combination of positions was an anomaly, even in his day. Campbell himself recognized that pacifists were "generally, if not universally, in favor of the total abolition of capital punishment."¹⁰²

The peace movement in nineteenth century America emerged after the War of 1812, and reached its peak during the unpopular war with Mexico. Harrell traces the development of the pacifist sentiment among the leaders of the Restoration Movement, and finds that, prior to 1846, most were in sympathy with the pacifists.¹⁰³

Although Campbell's opposition to war was clear from some of his very earliest writings, he did not treat the issue extensively until the time of the Mexican War. In November, 1846, he wrote, "From all quarters I am importuned to give my views of war in general, and of the present American-Mexican Republican War in particular."¹⁰⁴ But while he went on to expound his views of war in general--a detailed scriptural defense of the principles of pacifism--he hesitated on giving his views of the Mexican War--stating that he felt he must, for various reasons, "decline the task of scrutinizing the existing war either in its object, character, or tendency."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Campbell, "Tracts for the People--No. XV: Is Capital Punishment Sanctioned by Divine Authority?," MH, Third Series, 3:3 (March 1846): 126.

¹⁰³ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, pp. 139-144.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, "War--No. I," MH, Third Series, 3:11 (November 1846): 638.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Campbell later expressed regret at not having spoken out more directly concerning the Mexican War. In his 1848 "Address on War,"

Campbell's most systematic statement of his views on war was in his 1848 "Address on War." He began with the question, "Has one Christian nation a right to wage war against another Christian nation?" However, he soon dismissed this form of the question, because he believed there were no properly Christian nations on earth. But if the question was rephrased, "Can Christ's kingdom or church in one nation wage war against his own kingdom or church in another nation?" then Campbell believed the answer was clearly negative.¹⁰⁶ Toward the end of this essay, he summarized his main points. War is wrong, because the innocent suffer along with the guilty--or perhaps in place of the guilty. The fact that the Jews were authorized, or even commanded, to make war in the Old Testament, has no bearing on the New Covenant. The gospel is a message of peace--Messiah is the prince of peace, who pronounced his blessing upon the peacemakers. The fifth point of Campbell's summation might serve as his conclusion: "The precepts of Christianity positively inhibit war."¹⁰⁷

In the context of church-state relations, the most interesting part of the "Address on War" deals with the Christian's duty to the government in time of war. He posed the question, "Can an individual, not a public functionary, morally do that in obedience to his government which he cannot do in his own case?" The acts of murder and destruction carried on in war-time would clearly be wrong if an individual committed

he suggested that such directness might have saved lives. See, Campbell, "Tracts for the People--No. XXVI--An Address on War," MH, Third Series, 5:7 (July 1848):385. This essay, which will be referred to here simply as "Address on War," is also in Campbell's Popular Lectures and Addresses, pp. 342-366. However, all references here are to the essay as it appeared in the MH.

¹⁰⁶ Campbell, "Address on War," pp. 361-367.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 383.

them against his neighbor. Campbell's conclusion was that, "a Christian man can never, of right, be compelled to do that for the state, in defense of state's rights, which he cannot do for himself in defense of his own personal rights."¹⁰⁸ But Campbell did not specifically address the issue of what a Christian was to do if faced with conscription for military service; since the United States had never had a draft up to that time, the question probably did not seem particularly pressing to him.

The fact that Campbell seems to have been in a state of physical and intellectual decline by the time of the Civil War has been referred to above. The coming of the war disillusioned him, but his writing style by this time was diffuse, rambling, and disjointed. Lunger labels Campbell's few remarks on the Civil War as "pathetic."¹⁰⁹ The Millennial Harbinger, the publication of which by this time was largely in the hands of co-editors, maintained a neutral stance toward the war, and actually the war was mentioned infrequently in its pages.

Remembering Campbell's concern for biblical primitivism is the key to understanding the apparent dichotomy between his opposition to war and his support of capital punishment. In the 1840s, there was for a time considerable interest throughout America in the subject of penal reform. The number of crimes for which the death penalty could be imposed was reduced, and several states abolished the death penalty altogether.¹¹⁰ Harrell labels the issue of capital punishment "a minor reform movement"

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 371-372.

¹⁰⁹ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 260; see also p. 261.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 233; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, p. 200.

of the times, and one in which the leaders of the Restoration Movement were "never particularly interested."¹¹¹

Alexander Campbell did not write extensively on capital punishment, but he did publish four essays on this topic in 1846-1847. The first essay was the most significant--the others were primarily amplifications of it, and attempts to answer critics. His position on this issue was made up of a combination of pragmatic and scriptural arguments. He advocated a scale of punishments, "ascending up to capital punishment, only in the case of willful and deliberate murder, not to be extenuated in any case by passion, intemperance, or any temptation whatsoever."¹¹² Most of his arguments from scripture came from the Old Testament, which is surprising in view of his orientation toward New Testament primitivism. He did deal with the objection that the Old Testament code had been abrogated by Christ, but he argued that certain moral principles laid down in the Old Testament were not simply a part of the Jewish theocratic system, but were eternally valid. He also relied heavily upon the Apostle Paul's argument in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where it is said that "the powers that be are ordained by God," and that the magistrate, as a minister of God, "bears not the sword in vain."¹¹³

This first essay that Campbell wrote on capital punishment received wide currency. It was reprinted many times--Campbell reported nine months later that some six to seven thousand copies had been

¹¹¹Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, pp. 202-203.

¹¹²Campbell, "Tracts for the People--No. XV--Is Capital Punishment Sanctioned by Divine Authority?," MH, Third Series, 3:3 (March 1846): 132.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 142-143.

distributed.¹¹⁴ The three brief essays that Campbell published in this topic early in 1847 were basically restatements of his earlier arguments.¹¹⁵

Campbell, no doubt, saw no inconsistency in his positions on war and capital punishment. A literal reading of the gospel seems to make pacifism the clear Christian response to war, and a literal reading of the thirteenth chapter of Romans at least suggested that capital punishment was sanctioned by the New Testament. Yet Campbell did seem to be "bending" his strict New Testament primitivism on these two life issues. On the one hand, he disallowed any validity of the Old Testament teachings on war, but he did use Old Testament examples to buttress his argument in favor of capital punishment.

Campbell's thought on church and state issues was complex, often enigmatic, and not without some inconsistencies. It does not lend itself to simple summation or easy analysis. An examination of the significance of Campbell's views will be reserved until the concluding chapter of this thesis. But at this point, it might suffice to suggest that there were several sources which contributed to Campbell's thinking on these topics. The next chapter will examine the sources of Campbell's church-state thought in an attempt to investigate the extent of Campbell's indebtedness to the two streams which are the sources of the American tradition of religious liberty.

¹¹⁴ Campbell, "Capital Punishment--No. I," MH, Third Series, 4:2 (February 1847):61.

¹¹⁵ See, in addition to the above (footnote 114), "Capital Punishment, No. II," MH, Third Series, 4:3 (March 1847):158-160; "Capital Punishment--No. III," MH, Third Series, 4:4 (April 1847):186-189. For a further discussion of Campbell's position on capital punishment, see Lunker, Political Ethics, pp. 233-241.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOURCES OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S THOUGHT ON CHURCH-STATE ISSUES

The central question posed in this thesis concerns Alexander Campbell's relationship to the two streams or currents of thought that were instrumental in the development of the American political tradition, especially in regard to church-state matters. As noted in the introduction, many scholars have recognized that both Enlightenment philosophical and political influences and sectarian religious influences played important roles in bringing about the separation of church and state in America and in establishing safeguards for the freedom of religion. Harold L. Lunger has advanced the thesis that Alexander Campbell represents a "blending" of these two streams of thought; that is, that Campbell's political ethic bears the imprint of both.¹ I have sought to test that contention specifically as it applies to church-state matters. I believe that an examination of the sources of Campbell's thinking on church-state issues shows influences from both the Enlightenment philosophic/political tradition and from the sectarian religious tradition. Thus, Lunger's analysis appears to be a basically sound one, and provides

¹Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), p. 13. (Hereafter cited as Lunger, Political Ethics.) See also, *supra*, pp. 4-5.

an insightful means of looking at Campbell's relationship to the American political tradition.

Campbell at times expressed admiration for certain important figures in the philosophical world and in the history of Christianity, but he was not always willing to acknowledge his intellectual debt to others. At times, he strenuously argued that his views on matters of religion were not built upon a foundation laid by others. In a letter to his uncle Archibald Campbell in 1815, he acknowledged that he was "an Independent in church government; . . . of that faith and view of the gospel exhibited in John Walker's seven letters to Alexander Knox, and a Baptist in so far as respects baptism. . . ."² But he also went on to assert: "What I am in religion I am from examination, reflection, conviction, not from 'ipse dixit,' tradition or human authority. . . ."³ When Barton Stone and he discussed bringing their two restorationist groups into union, Campbell seemed to want it made clear that he did not believe that Stone's work had in any way antedated his own work in restoring the "ancient order of things."⁴ Yet, he was also willing to admit, at other times, that:

For my own part, I am greatly indebted to all the reformers, from Martin Luther down to John Wesley. I could not enumerate or particularize the individuals, living and dead, who have

²Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origins, Progress, and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1897, two-volumes-in-one reprint of original editions published 1868, 1870), 1:466. (Hereafter cited as Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell.)

³Ibid.

⁴Alexander Campbell, "Reply on Union, Communion, and the Name Christian," Millennial Harbinger (hereafter, MH) 2:9 (September 1831): 390, and Campbell, "The Christian Messenger," MH 2:12 (December 1831): 180.

assisted in forming my mind. I am some way indebted to some person or other for every idea I have on every subject.⁵

In some cases, Campbell may simply have been blind to influences that actually were involved. In his debate with the Presbyterian clergyman N. L. Rice, Campbell distanced himself from any ties to the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. "What have we to do with the Anabaptists?" he asked.⁶ Yet, in fact, Campbell probably did receive some of his emphasis on the free, voluntary nature of the church from the Anabaptist tradition, even though it may have come to him second-hand through some of the restorationists in Scotland.

In this chapter, Campbell's intellectual inheritance from the Enlightenment tradition and from the sectarian religious tradition will be examined. I believe there are clear indications that his thought on church-state matters owes some debt to both. However, in some instances, it may only be possible to call attention to sources which were likely to have influenced Campbell--direct, clear evidence of such influence is not always attainable. But beginning with the sectarian religious "stream" (to borrow Lunger's metaphor), I intend to examine four possible sources of Campbell's church-state thought within this tradition: 1) the heritage of the Protestant Reformation, especially the Radical Reformers; 2) the contributions of Covenant theology; 3) the teachings of the Old Light,

⁵ Campbell, "Letters to William Jones, No. V," MH 6:7 (July 1835): 303-304.

⁶ A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice on the Action, Subject, Design, and Administrator of Christian Baptism (Lexington, KY: A. T. Skillman and Son, 1844), p. 873. (Hereafter referred to as Campbell-Rice Debate.) Campbell's view of the Anabaptists, like that of many people in his time, was probably unduly colored by acquaintance with the Munsterite perversion of Anabaptism.

Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church, in which Campbell grew up; and 4) the contacts with English and Scottish nonconformists.

Campbell often referred to his program for the restoration of the church as "the current reformation," and it is clear that he had high regard for some of the major figures from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. He believed that Martin Luther and John Calvin had both made good beginnings in a work that remained to be finished. In his debate with Rice, in 1844, Campbell referred to Luther and Calvin as "God's chosen vessels to accomplish at the proper time a mighty moral revolution. . . ."⁷ Lamenting the fact that many Protestants seemed willing to accept the dictates of some authority figure, rather than to use their own judgment in interpreting scripture, Campbell cried out, "O for another Luther, to lash the popery of false Protestants. . . ."⁸ As Richard L. Harrison, Jr., professor of church history at Lexington Theological Seminary, has noted, Campbell "held Luther in highest esteem, even when he disagreed with the Reformer."⁹ Harrison calls attention to four important aspects of the Restoration Movement's heritage that he believes can be clearly traced to Luther and his Protestant followers: 1) the emphasis on authority of scripture; 2) the centrality of the Lord's Supper in Christian worship; 3) the priesthood of all believers, and 4) the appreciation of and use of "clear reason."¹⁰ In an article in the December 1835 Millennial Harbinger,

⁷Campbell-Rice Debate, p. 587.

⁸Campbell, "The Current Reformation," MH, 4th Series, 3:2 (February 1853):63.

⁹Richard L. Harrison, Jr., "Martin Luther and the Reformation of the Nineteenth Century," Discipliana 43:4 (Winter 1983):56.

¹⁰Ibid.

Campbell discussed certain problems that he saw among the adherents of the Restoration Movement. Among these dangers, he warned against too strongly attacking Calvinism. "The cause we plead is no more anticalvinian than antiarminian," he said, and went on to admit, "At all events, if I could dissect my own speculations, I opine there would be more of John Calvin than of James Arminius in my moral philosophy. . . ."¹¹ Thus, it can be seen that Campbell acknowledged the contribution that the preeminent reformers of the sixteenth century had made to the cause of authentic Christianity, and did not deny their contributions to his own thinking. In the case of John Calvin, it might be said that while Campbell strenuously objected to much of what was called "Calvinism" in his own day, he shared certain basic ideas with the Genevan reformer.

But to speak of the "sectarian religious tradition" and its effects upon Campbell does not refer precisely to Luther, Calvin, and the other magisterial reformers. The sectarian tradition refers more specifically to what Roland Bainton has called the "Left Wing" of the Reformation, or to what George Hunston Williams has called the Radical Reformation.¹² In terms of his church-state thought, Campbell's debt to the left-wing reformers seems to be greater than his debt to the magisterial reformers.

Bainton notes four characteristics of those individuals and groups that made up what he referred to as the left wing of the Reformation. The first was a strong ethical note. Secondly, they emphasized Christian primitivism. Third, they shared a heightened sense of eschatology.

¹¹ Campbell, "The Crisis," MH 6:12 (December 1835):597-598.

¹² See Roland H. Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," The Journal of Religion 21:2 (April 1941):124-134, and George Huntston Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).

Fourth, there was a demand for the separation of church and state.¹³ Lurger contended that all four of these notes were present in Campbell's thought, and I would agree with this assessment.¹⁴ Only on the first point does there seem to be a significant divergence; while the Radical Reformers based their social ethic primarily on the gospels, and even more specifically sometimes upon the Sermon on the Mount, Campbell tended to draw his ethical norms from the book of Acts and the epistles, because of his strong covenantal emphasis.¹⁵ But in the emphasis on Christian primitivism, eschatology, and the call for separation of church and state, there is much similarity in the thought of Campbell and the Radical Reformers.¹⁶

Yet, despite these similarities, it is not surprising that Campbell seemed blind to these influences from the Anabaptists and other Radical Reformers of the sixteenth century. As noted above, he may have received some of these ideas secondhand, through the restorationists with whom he came into contact in Scotland. But, since the Radical Reformers claimed to take their teachings directly from the Bible, Campbell may have thought he got his ideas from the same source. As Lurger noted:

¹³Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," pp. 126-132.

¹⁴Lurger, Political Ethics, p. 18.

¹⁵See, *ibid.*, pp. 32-33, 244. Campbell's covenant theology often led him to emphasize the book of Acts and the epistles at the expense of the gospels because, according to a strict approach to the covenants, the time described in the gospels was a period still under the Jewish Covenant; the New Covenant did not take effect until the death of Christ.

¹⁶For a discussion of the restitution or restoration idea in the Campbells and in Anabaptist thought, see Richard T. Hughes, "A Comparison of the Restitution Motif in the Campbells (1809-1830) and the Anabaptists (1524-1560)," Mennonite Quarterly Review 45:4 (October 1971):312-330.

Campbell would have claimed, and with some measure of truth, that any similarities between his own views and the classical left-wing position were purely coincidental. He went back for his teachers not to the sixteenth century but to the first. Given his New Testament primitivism, he would have said that his other left-wing characteristics were derived directly from the New Testament.¹⁷

Campbell, whether he recognized it or not, probably owed a considerable intellectual debt to the Radical Reformers, especially in regards to the demand for separation of church and state. Like the early Anabaptists, Campbell feared that a mingling of those two institutions would lead to a corruption of the purity of the church. This was one of the reasons he opposed infant baptism--he believed that practice blurred the distinction between the church and the world.¹⁸ Since the influences from the Radical Reformers were mediated to Campbell through the Seceder tradition, the Scottish restorationists, and other agencies, Campbell may not have recognized the ultimate source of some of these ideas. Indeed, a fruitful area for future research would seem to be the possible connections between sixteenth-century Anabaptism and the various nonconformist movements in eighteenth-century England and Scotland.

According to Disciples historian Winfred E. Garrison, the Covenant Theology of John Cocceius exercised an important influence upon Alexander Campbell's thinking.¹⁹ The German theologian John, or Johannes, Cocceius (1603-1669), drawing upon the work of earlier German and British thinkers, attempted to construct a systematic approach to the process of salvation by fitting all of the commandments and promises of God into a framework of

¹⁷ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 19.

¹⁸ Campbell-Rice Debate, pp. 305, 346, 355.

¹⁹ Winfred E. Garrison, Alexander Campbell's Theology: Its Sources and Historical Setting (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1900), pp. 149-150.

successive covenants. Covenant theology, Garrison contended, permeated religious thinking in Scotland in the eighteenth century, and was especially prominent in the teachings of the Seceder Presbyterians.²⁰ Alexander Campbell, of course, received his early religious training in a church that was a branch of the Seceder movement. Leslie Lyall Kingsbury, whose doctoral dissertation at the University of Edinburgh was a study of the philosophical influences bearing on Campbell, also saw covenant theology as an important factor in Campbell's theological background. He concluded that Campbell knew of covenant theology both as it was taught by the Seceders, and from his own contact with the original sources, such as the writings of Cocceius.²¹

The clearest example of Campbell's use of covenant theology is found in his "Sermon on the Law," a message preached at a Baptist association meeting at Wellsburg, Virginia in September 1816.²² In it, Campbell clearly distinguished between the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian covenants, and affirmed that Christians are bound only to the Christian covenant.²³ Although this point is central to much of Campbell's thinking generally, the main concern here, as it related to his thinking on church-state issues, is that the distinction between the covenants allowed Campbell to discount the theocratic implications of much of the

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 132-133, 151.

²¹ Leslie Lyall Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences Bearing on Alexander Campbell and the Beginning of the Disciples of Christ Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1954), pp. 85, 92. (Hereafter cited as Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences.")

²² The text of the "Sermon on the Law" is found in F. L. Rowe, ed., Pioneer Sermons and Addresses (Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 1908), pp. 105-148.

²³ Ibid., pp. 127-132.

Old Testament. As Lunger noted, "This radical contrast between the Old and New Testaments set Campbell off from all those who, on the basis of a 'level Bible,' incorporate Jewish theocratic ideas into their Christian political theories."²⁴ However, Campbell did not consistently apply this distinction. In his discussion of capital punishment, for example, he made use of several Old Testament examples of the death penalty. These scriptural accounts, mainly from the book of Genesis, were not simply a part of the Patriarchal or Mosaic covenants, Campbell said, but were a part of an immutable moral law, valid through all time. By means of this simple adjustment, he was able to justify the use of Old Testament norms under the Christian Covenant.²⁵ But generally, covenant theology had an important influence in Campbell's church-state thought, primarily in the rejection of any theocratic systems such as had existed in ancient Israel.

The church in which Alexander Campbell was raised was the Old Light, Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian Church. The origins of this body have been discussed in chapter two.²⁶ It is reasonable to assume that this background had considerable influence on Campbell's thought. As he came to embrace an orientation toward New Testament primitivism, Campbell reacted against much of his heritage from Presbyterianism. However, the positions he later took seem to have affirmed, rather than questioned, the principle of dissenting from the established church, which was a key point among the Seceders, and more especially among the Anti-Burghers. Lunger's assessment may be seen as a good summary of Campbell's heritage from the Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceders, as it relates to church-state

²⁴ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 29.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 241.

²⁶ Supra, pp. 39-40.

issues: Campbell was "brought up in a religious fellowship which had come into being in opposition to the principle of establishment, and in the wing of that church which went farthest in rejecting any church-state alliance."²⁷

Although the contact that Campbell had with English and Scottish religious non-conformists was very important in the effect it had on his religious thought in general, it is difficult to trace any clear contributions these groups made to his understanding of the relationship of church and state. Perhaps the primary influence from Campbell's contact with these groups was his acquaintance with the restorationists in Scotland associated with Robert and James Haldane. During his year at the University of Glasgow, Campbell became familiar with the Haldanes' work, and the principles they espoused.²⁸ The New Testament primitivism that characterized this group, as well as their teachings on the nature of faith, and their congregational church polity, all made deep impressions on Campbell. But in matters specifically relating to church and state, the Haldanes and the other non-conformist groups provided further examples of voluntary, gathered churches, free from the coercive power of the state. With these examples in mind, added to the influence of the Radical Reformers discussed earlier, Campbell was ready to enthusiastically embrace and defend the principle of church-state separation when he came to America.

In summary, then, Campbell's thought on church and state issues seems to have received considerable contributions from each of the sources discussed here. From the Radical Reformers of the sixteenth century, he

²⁷Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 20.

²⁸Campbell's contacts with the Haldane movement are described in chapter two, *supra*, pp. 44-46.

received the strong emphasis upon the separation of church and state, based on a desire to keep the church free from contamination by the world. The covenant theology of John Cocceius influenced his sharp distinction between the Old and New Testaments, which led to a rejection of any kind of theocratic notions based on the example of ancient Israel. The specific influences derived from the Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterians and from the Scottish independents are more difficult to isolate. But in both cases, he received, at the least, a confirmation of the ideal of a free, voluntary, and separated church.

But the achievement of separation of church and state in America was not the result of the efforts of the sectarian religious thinkers alone. Rather, this was due to a temporary alliance between those associated with these religious groups, and those who were influenced by Enlightenment philosophy and political thought. There is clear evidence that Alexander Campbell's thinking on church-state concerns was significantly shaped by Enlightenment influences.

Despite the fact that Campbell was, in many ways, of a rather orthodox Christian orientation, he could also be called a product of the Enlightenment. His formal higher education at the University of Glasgow, though brief, brought him into contact with the writings of many of the major Enlightenment thinkers, and lifelong eclectic reading habits broadened this acquaintance. As Robert Frederick West noted in his Yale doctoral dissertation on Campbell and natural religion, he was "at home with the leading scholars and spirits of the Enlightenment."²⁹

²⁹Robert Frederick West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 3.

Campbell's approach to religious matters in general was in many ways influenced by Enlightenment principles. For example, he came to the Bible with a commitment to rationalism, yet this was tempered by a basic presupposition of the reliability of the scriptures. He was a rationalist, yet his rationalism had limits. He did not go to the extremes of skepticism. While Campbell was an inheritor of the Enlightenment tradition, it is also true, as Kingsbury noted, that: "He was well enough aware that in that tradition was liberty and also danger, and so he was both a skeptic and a believer in the Enlightenment."³⁰ Speaking of his early years when he iconoclastically attacked much of what went on around him in the name of religion, Campbell summed up his own position well: "We lost all relish for creeds, for fashionable sermons, and for all the ceremony belonging to sectarianism. We became skeptics in everything sectarian--in every thing in religion--but the Bible."³¹

But even though Campbell's skepticism had limits, there was still an apparent similarity between him and the Enlightenment thinkers who came to reject orthodox Christianity altogether. As West noted, "There is a certain meeting of minds and temper between Campbell and the opponents of revealed religion in their onslaught against traditional Christianity and ecclesiasticism which cannot be disregarded. . . ."³² For one thing, the methodology that Campbell used in attacking what he considered abuses resembled the skeptics approach. Satire and irony were favorite weapons of both. West saw "a Voltaire-type of caustic cynicism" in Campbell's

³⁰Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," pp. 357-358.

³¹Campbell, "The Verse-A-Day System the High Road to Heresy," MH 3:7 (July 1832):313.

³²West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion, pp. 45-46.

attacks on opponents,³³ and he went on to summarize Campbell's other similarities to the skeptics:

In short, Campbell was willing to go, and actually did go, far with all opponents of revealed religion. He shared with them a common skepticism of all traditional religious absolutism and claims to infallibility in theory or practice. He went as far as any of them, with the possible exception of the advocates of total political anarchy, in pleading for the separation of the church from the state. He agreed that conventional religion, in its present state, should be abolished for the good of mankind.³⁴

While Campbell was acquainted with a wide range of the Enlightenment writers, most authorities are agreed that the preeminent impact upon his thought was from the Englishman John Locke.³⁵ Campbell was, according to West, "saturated with the works of John Locke."³⁶ Kingsbury affirmed that, "There is no doubt that of all the British School the predominating influences in his [Campbell's] philosophy were the writings of John Locke and the Scottish Common Sense School of Philosophy."³⁷ Lunger believed that by analyzing Campbell's speeches and activities at the Virginia Constitution Convention one could see that his view of the social compact and of the principles of government were essentially derived from Locke.³⁸

³³ Ibid., p. 48.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

³⁵ For a discussion of various other Enlightenment figures with whom Campbell was apparently acquainted, see Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," p. 292; Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 73; West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion, p. 46.

³⁶ West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion, p. 46.

³⁷ Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," p. 97.

³⁸ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 66.

On at least one occasion, Campbell listed Locke as among those to whom he was intellectually indebted.³⁹ Richardson records that Campbell studied Locke as a youth, under his father's guidance:

As he advanced in age, he learned greatly to admire the character and works of Locke, whose 'Letters on Toleration' seem to have made a lasting impression upon him, and to have fixed his ideas of religion and civil liberty. The 'Essay on Human Understanding' he appears to have thoroughly studied under the direction of his father. . . .⁴⁰

Campbell's esteem for Locke can be seen in the numerous references to the philosopher in his works. In his lecture on "Literature, Science, and Art," Campbell referred to Bacon, Newton, and Locke, "the great mental and moral philosopher," as examples of great masters of science who were also believers in the Bible.⁴¹ In 1832, Campbell reprinted a short section from Locke's paraphrase of the Pauline epistles, which included Locke's negative comments on the way in which the scriptures were divided into chapters and verses (which he believed sometimes hindered comprehension).⁴² In the January, 1844, issue of the Millennial Harbinger, Campbell reprinted a portion of Locke's Letters on Toleration, and introduced it with the following remarks:

Few compositions of so humble dimensions as Locke's Letter on Toleration, have exerted a mightier influence in the cause of human liberty and civilization, than this briefest but most puissant production of the great Christian philosopher.⁴³

³⁹ Campbell, "Letters to William Jones, No. V," MH 6:7 (July 1835): 304.

⁴⁰ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 1:33-34.

⁴¹ Campbell, "Literature, Science, and Art," in his Popular Lectures and Addresses (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1863), p. 136.

⁴² Campbell, "Locke's Opinion of the Form in Which the Scriptures Are Printed," MH 3:6 (June 1832):274-275.

⁴³ Campbell, "Locke on Toleration," MH, Third Series, 1:1 (January 1844):11-17, quote on p. 11.

Campbell also quoted from the Letters on Toleration in his debate with Rice in 1844. In discussing the use of creeds, to which Campbell was opposed, he argued that among those who agreed with his position were "the patrons and promulgers [sic] of the principles that originated our political institutions; and infused into the mother country, and into this, the true doctrines of civil liberty."⁴⁴ He went on to introduce an extensive quotation from Locke, dealing with the organization and freedom of the church, noting that it was "written by the greatest patron and advocate of civil and religious liberty in the world."⁴⁵

As historian William Warren Sweet has noted, John Locke had many "enthusiastic disciples" throughout early America. In particular, his Two Treatises on Government were very popular. Locke wrote this work in 1690, primarily as a justification for the Glorious Revolution of 1688. But as Sweet commented, "in seeking justification for the seizure of power by Parliament and for the overthrow of King James, he [Locke] unwittingly furnished the principal arguments for American resistance to British authority two generations later."⁴⁶ In his debate with the Roman Catholic bishop John B. Purcell in 1837, Campbell used the Lockean ideas of the right of revolution to extricate himself from a rather awkward position. In arguing that Catholicism was injurious to American institutions, Campbell referred to many examples from history in which popes had deposed kings and released citizens from their oaths and vows of allegiance.

⁴⁴ Campbell-Rice Debate, p. 795.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ William Warren Sweet, "Natural Religion and Religious Liberty in America," The Journal of Religion 25:1 (January 1945):46.

Campbell argued that anything that led to such a breaking of vows was not morally right.⁴⁷

Purcell responded in his next speech by asking Campbell what he would have done had he been alive at the time of the American Revolution. Would he have broken his oath of allegiance to the king? If others had asked him what to do, what would he have advised? Campbell answered, "If they had taken a solemn oath, they should not break it." To this, Purcell rejoined, "Then was George Washington a perjurer, and all the officers of the army and navy, all the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and all the subjects of the king of Great Britain were perjurers." Though Campbell protested that such implications did not follow directly from what he had said, he continued to maintain that a solemn oath should not be broken.⁴⁸ But he seemed to recognize that Purcell had gotten the better of him in the exchange, and on the following day he returned to the subject again. But this time, as Lunger noted, he was "armed with the Lockean argument for revolution."⁴⁹ While he still maintained that in Protestant doctrine there were no provisions for the setting aside of an oath, he affirmed that if the oath were in the nature of a covenant, "then one of the parties failing, so far vacates the covenant as to set the other free from his oath. . . ."⁵⁰ This, he argued, was the situation with the

⁴⁷ A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion Between Alexander Campbell, Bethany, Va., and the Right Reverend John B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: J. A. James, 1837; reprint ed., St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, n.d.), pp. 310-312. (Hereafter cited as Campbell-Purcell Debate.)

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 314.

⁴⁹ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 161. Lunger provides an excellent summary and analysis of this exchange, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁰ Campbell-Purcell Debate, p. 323.

American revolutionaries:

Now, in the case supposed, the king of England was generally allowed to have receded from the conditions on which that oath was taken by the persons who renounced their allegiance to him; he having failed to protect and cherish his American subjects, according to the tenor of the charter given, they were freed from the obligation of allegiance.⁵¹

Although he does not cite Locke by name in this instance, the idea of a covenant or a social contract between the king and the subjects, which Campbell used to justify the actions of the American revolutionaries, nevertheless has a very Lockean ring to it.

There are numerous other similarities between the views of Locke and Campbell on a variety of matters which are not within the purview of this thesis, and there is abundant evidence that shows Campbell's high regard for Locke.⁵² More specifically, on church-state matters, Campbell seems to have taken his ideas on the role of government and the notion of a contract or covenant between ruler and subjects from Locke.⁵³ Like Locke, Campbell saw the role of government primarily involving "things of the world" and having little to do with religious matters.⁵⁴ Campbell believed that in America in his own time, "The present government aims at being purely political, and therefore can secure only man's political rights and promote his political happiness. This is all that worldly men wish, and it is all that a sectarian profession of religion can reasonably

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Kingsbury examines the other points of contact between Campbell and Locke in detail; see "Philosophical Influences," pp. 122-210.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 108, 188.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 188.

or justly require."⁵⁵ Lunger believed that Campbell shared Locke's theory of separation of church and state, which saw such separation primarily in terms of "mutual non-interference" of magistrates and clergy in each other's realms. But Lunger argued that such a theory was too simple, and that as a result, Campbell "never dealt adequately with the problem of the layman who is at once a member of the church and a citizen of the state."⁵⁶ Overall, it appears that Locke's thought was the predominant influence from the Enlightenment tradition upon Campbell's thinking in general, and specifically upon his church-state thought as well.

There is considerable evidence that Campbell's thinking was also shaped by contacts with the Scottish Common Sense School of Philosophy. The Scottish School, led by philosophers such as Thomas Reid (1710-1796) and Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) and the poet James Beattie (1735-1803), held Locke in high esteem, but sought to develop a position of mediation which would avoid the skepticism which some later thinkers had developed from Locke's premises. Scottish Common Sense Philosophy was then in part a reaction against the extremes of Hume and other skeptics, and came to be regarded by many as the champion of religion and morality.⁵⁷

Campbell's acquaintance with the Scottish School was deepened during his study at Glasgow University. Reid had been gone from his

⁵⁵ Campbell, "An Oration in Honor of the Fourth of July, 1830," in his Popular Lectures and Addresses (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1863), pp. 373-374. Compare this with Kingsbury's summary of Locke's views, "Philosophical Influences," p. 188.

⁵⁶ Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," pp. 23, 211. Sydney E. Ahlstrom discusses the "Scottish philosophy" and its impact in America, see his A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 355-356.

teaching position there for many years, but his influence was still felt.⁵⁸ Perhaps the most direct contact that Campbell had with this school of thought was his knowledge of the works of Beattie. Known today primarily as a Scottish poet, Beattie was also a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. Kingsbury found evidence that while at Glasgow, Campbell closely studied Beattie's work, The Elements of Moral Science, and had copied large extracts from it into his "Common Book."⁵⁹ This was significant, Kingsbury believed, because while there is no clear evidence that Campbell studied Locke's Two Treatises on Government directly, he at least got many of the same principles second-hand through Beattie, whose political theory was fairly close to Locke's.⁶⁰ Kingsbury concluded that, "Campbell was obviously and directly indebted to Beattie's version of natural rights philosophy at many points."⁶¹ Though Campbell's thought in general reflected the approach of the Scottish Common Sense school, his familiarity with the works of Beattie appears to be the clearest direct link that would have affected his church-state thinking.

When Alexander Campbell left the British Isles and came to America, he did not leave behind his knowledge of and fondness for the Enlightenment tradition. Nor would it have been wise to have done so. In America, he found that his commitment to Enlightenment ideals provided a common ground

⁵⁸ S. Morris Eames, The Philosophy of Alexander Campbell (Bethany, WV: Bethany College, 1966), p. 14. Eames study provides some valuable insights, but its value is limited by its lack of documentation.

⁵⁹ According to Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 69, these extracts included material dealing with law, civil government, right, obligation, and justice.

⁶⁰ Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," pp. 289-291.

⁶¹ Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," p. 291. Lunger discusses Beattie's influence upon Campbell; see Political Ethics, pp. 69-73.

between himself and the makers of the American political tradition. For example, when he served in the Virginia Constitutional Convention, Campbell did not base his political arguments upon appeals to scripture, but instead appealed to the norms that other Americans of his day would have appealed to--the Bill of Rights, and the natural rights philosophy of Locke, Beattie, Montesquieu, and Jefferson.⁶²

If Campbell was in some sense a disciple of Locke, then he found many others of like mind when he arrived in America. Locke was widely read in America, and influenced individuals in a wide variety of fields. Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer suggested that "it was the Englishman John Locke who of all modern philosophers carried the most weight among statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who in turn laid the framework of our civil and religious liberties."⁶³ Sweet thought that Locke's views were especially significant in relation to the church-state issue because Locke "was undoubtedly the father of liberal opinion in eighteenth-century America, and because he, more than any other, was responsible for making nature, intuition, and common sense popular and familiar colonial ideas."⁶⁴ Since both Campbell and the leading American political thinkers were in some ways dependent upon Locke, this meant that when Campbell spoke or wrote in political matters, he could do so within a

⁶² Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influences," p. 296.

⁶³ Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, Church and State in the United States, rev. one-vol. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 4. See also Ahlstrom's discussion of Locke's significance in America, Religious History of the American People, pp. 351-352.

⁶⁴ William Warren Sweet, American Culture and Religion: Six Essays (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972), p. 50.

framework of political philosophy that he held in common with many Americans.⁶⁵

Campbell's heritage from the Enlightenment included a general commitment to rationalism, although it had certain limits. He questioned much that passed as "religious," yet he accepted on faith the basic, fundamental points of the Christian message. He was skeptical of much of what had traditionally been called religion, but his skepticism did not extend to the rejection of revealed religion altogether. He firmly believed that his full acceptance of the authority and trustworthiness of the scriptures was the most rational course to take. Perhaps the clearest direct contributions of the Enlightenment to his thought was a generous dose of Lockean influence. In the realm of church-state matters, his ideas on the secular role of government, the concept of mutual non-interference between magistrate and clergy, and his ideas on the social contract and the right of revolution, all came in large part from Locke. These same principles were confirmed by his contact with Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, especially in his study of the works of Beattie. The philosophical background that Campbell received from all of these sources allowed him to speak a common language with the statesman and politicians within the American tradition.

In this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate that the sources of Campbell's thought on church and state issues are to be found in both the sectarian religious tradition and in the Enlightenment philosophical tradition. Too often, these two currents of thought are seen only as diverging streams, or as forces that were antithetical to one another.

⁶⁵Lunger, Political Ethics, p. 67.

But Campbell can be seen as an example of one who sought to develop a synthesis of the two positions. Borrowing some and rejecting some from each tradition, he sought to develop a world-view or a personal system of thought that was both Enlightened and Christian. As it touched upon matters involving the relationship of church and state, his personal system of thought was indeed a synthesis or a blending of Enlightenment and sectarian religious influences.

CONCLUSION

Sydney E. Ahlstrom said of Alexander Campbell: "By any standard he is an important figure in American church history, a curious compound of the rationalistic theologian on one hand and the eccentric and legalistic sectary on the other."¹ A "curious compound" is certainly an apt description of a man who was to a great extent both a skeptic and a believer, both an iconoclast and a reformer.² Ahlstrom's comment, although referring to Campbell's life and work in general, can be applied to his church-state views, as well. Campbell's thinking on church and state owed something to both rationalism and sectarianism.

I have attempted to answer the central questions posed in this thesis in the previous chapter. Taking Lunger's interpretation--that Campbell represents a blending of Enlightenment and sectarian religious influences--as a hypothesis to be tested, I have sought to examine Campbell's thought on church and state. I believe there is abundant evidence that Campbell was indebted to both "streams" for contributions to his thinking on church and state relationships.

One other question was posed in the introduction: Does one of these streams dominate Campbell's thought? I do not believe there is

¹Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 448.

²I have taken the phrase "iconoclast and reformer" from a chapter title in Winfred E. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot's The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), see chapter eight, pp. 162ff.

conclusive evidence that one stream dominates Campbell's positions on church and state questions, but it does seem that the religious influence was, in the end, generally preeminent in Campbell's thinking. He would take reason only so far. As Robert Frederick West noted, Campbell made reason "a necessary servant of faith." Campbell believed that faith went beyond reason, but never contrary to it.³ When he became skeptical of the religious world around him, he did not abandon faith, but rather sought what he considered to be the truth in an adoption of New Testament primitivism. If the abuses and divisiveness of the churches of his own day offended the rationalist in him, his answer was to seek to do away with those abuses in a program to restore and unite the church based on the example of the early church. Restoration, or primitivism, I believe, must be recognized as a key, determinative component in Campbell's thought.

What Campbell said and wrote about church and state relationships was complex, and he was not without his inconsistencies. While there were certain basic principles that he seemed to hold to throughout his life, his actions and positions in regard to certain issues were not always consistent. For example, his use of the postmaster's franking privilege to mail out thousands of pieces of Restorationist literature is incongruous alongside his opposition to any kind of government funding or support for ventures of a religious nature. His advocacy of teaching the Bible and the "common elements" of the Christian faith in the public schools was not consistent with his opposition to the establishment of religion. The Campbell who rejoiced in the "common religion" enshrined in certain American social and legal institutions does not sound like the

³Robert Frederick West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 100.

same man who opposed Sabbath legislation, at least in part out of a regard for the rights of religious minorities. The Campbell who found Old Testament examples to be relevant in a discussion of capital punishment seems to be at variance with the man who rejected the applicability of Old Testament norms in nearly all other considerations, including the discussion of war.

But Campbell's self-consistency, or lack thereof, is not a major concern here. What is the significance of his views on church and state issues? First of all, it must be recognized that his views, for the most part, were not unique. Rather, he was in many ways representative of a considerable body of opinion. As Roland Bainton noted concerning Campbell's social thought:

Alexander Campbell in his social outlook was a highly representative American of the first half of the nineteenth century. He combined all of the dominant attitudes of the time, many of them disparate in origin and incongruous at least in their implications. Somehow he managed to hold them all together and to arrive at a conclusion which added up to about this: that society is riddled by evils, that these evils are capable of redress, and that America offers a better opportunity than anywhere else in the world for their elimination. In this land, by the effort of man and the grace of God, the millennium will shortly be introduced.⁴

Campbell's views on church and state concerns are also significant because they presumably influenced many of the adherents of the Restoration Movement, a sizeable American religious body. However, the precise nature of that influence is hard to determine. One Campbellian idea that his followers readily took to heart was the freedom of opinion on nonessential matters, and many seemed to apply this principle liberally whenever Campbell's social or political comments did not suit them. Since they

⁴Roland Bainton, "Alexander Campbell and the Social Order," in his Christian Unity and Religion in New England, Collected Papers in Church History, Series Three (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 154.

often felt free to disagree with Campbell on such matters, it is difficult to assess the extent of his impact on their social or political thinking or activities. But for the most part, those within the more conservative branches of the Restoration Movement (the Churches of Christ and the independent Christian Churches) have tended to avoid involvement as church bodies in social and political matters. This may well be due to some extent to Campbell's example and admonitions. But, on the other hand, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which has tended to be more liberal theologically than the other wings of the movement, has also been more socially and politically active. However, this activism, which is primarily a twentieth-century development, may find its origins in later sources, such as the Social Gospel movement.⁵

The distinction between faith and opinion, which was a central point in the theology of the Restoration Movement, underlaid many of Campbell's views on church-state issues. As Harold L. Lunger has pointed out, this distinction served a useful purpose--it left most political issues, upon which there did not appear to be a clear biblical mandate, in the realm of private judgment.⁶ Thus, the churches of the Restoration Movement were spared much controversy over what the "official" position of the church should be on such matters. This may have helped to preserve the unity of the Movement in the early years. To Campbell, of course, the preservation of unity was of paramount importance, for the church had to

⁵Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker see the social gospel theology as the source of much of the Disciples' renewed social concern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See their Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), pp. 284-286.

⁶Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), p. 270.

be restored to its pristine purity and unity before the millennium could commence. Since the dawn of this new age would sweep away all social and political problems, the unity that was required to usher in the millennium was the first priority.

But the emphasis on freedom of opinion and on keeping matters of opinion out of the life of the church also contributed to one of the primary weaknesses of Campbell's political thinking: the failure to give positive guidance to the individual Christian, who must "render to Caesar" and to God, often at the same time. Leaving political matters in the realm of opinion may have kept them from disrupting the unity of the church, but it also meant that the individual member of the Restorationist churches had little spiritual counsel about such issues. Campbell's reluctance to provide this kind of leadership for the Christian person seeking to put his or her faith into practice in the social and political world is no doubt part of the reason why at least a large segment of the churches springing from the Restoration Movement have never developed a coherent, distinctive approach to politics or social action. The practical outcome has often been this: in seeking not to speak authoritatively on matters of opinion, the churches have tended not to speak at all, even on issues of great moral magnitude, such as slavery or war.

The views that Campbell had on church and state matters are also significant in that they provide an example of interaction between Enlightenment ideals and sectarian religious principles. If indeed Campbell did attempt to synthesize Enlightenment and sectarian religious thinking, in his world-view generally as well as in his church-state thinking, this then provides an interesting example of a way in which religion reacted to the Enlightenment. It is well established that

Enlightenment deism and rationalistic skepticism had a generally detrimental effect on traditional Christianity in Europe and America. In Europe, the Wesleyan movement in England and Pietism on the continent are often cited as examples of reactions to this. Repulsed by the cold rationality of the Enlightenment's approach to religion, both Wesley and the Pietists sought to recover a heart-felt, inward spirituality. In America, the Second Great Awakening is often seen in the same light--as a reaction to, and a recovery from, the extremes of deism and atheism engendered by Enlightenment influences. Perhaps Campbell and the Restoration Movement should be included as a fourth example of a way in which religion reacted to the Enlightenment.⁷ But, unlike Wesley, the Pietists, or the American revivalists, Campbell began his program of reform from a position of accepting much of the Enlightenment tradition and was actually in sympathy with many of the skeptics' criticisms of the churches as they existed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though Campbell started from a presupposition of faith, he sought to develop an approach to religion that was rational, logical, and practical. This is no doubt part of the reason why the message of the Restoration Movement experienced such marked success on the American frontier: it was readily acceptable to the pioneer farmers and villagers who put much store in things practical, but had little concern for the theoretical.

From the time of the early church, but especially since the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment, each generation of Christian thinkers has had to struggle with the question of how faith relates to reason. Alexander Campbell can be seen as an example of one approach to that question. He

⁷ I am indebted here to suggestions from West's Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion, pp. vii-viii.

sought to restore and conserve what was essential and valuable out of the religious tradition, but he was also willing to adopt the methodology and much of the philosophy of the Enlightenment tradition.

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CB--The Christian Baptist

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CHURCH AND STATE IN THE THOUGHT OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

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Many scholars have noted that the achievement of the separation of church and state in America and the incorporation into the Constitution of safeguards of the freedom of religion, was due to the combined efforts of "sectarian religionists," on the one hand, and of political thinkers and statesmen who had been influenced by Enlightenment philosophy, on the other. These two "streams of thought" represent the sources of the American tradition of religious freedom and nonestablishment. Harold L. Linger, a social ethicist at Brite Divinity School, has suggested that the political ethics of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), the leading figure in the early history of the American Restoration Movement, represents a "blending" of these two streams. This thesis is an examination of Campbell's views on church and state, seeking to determine whether his thinking in this particular case was shaped by both Enlightenment and sectarian religious influences.

Introductory materials include a survey of the backgrounds of church-state relationships to the eve of the nineteenth century in America, and a biographical sketch of Alexander Campbell and his relationship to the American Restoration Movement. Campbell's thinking on church-state issues is examined by an investigation of several of his published works. Campbell edited two journals, The Christian Baptist, from 1824 to 1830, and The Millennial Harbinger, from 1830 until shortly before his death in 1866. These journals, together with his published speeches, lectures, and debates, provide abundant primary source material for a study of his thinking.

The examination of Campbell's church-state thought is approached in two ways. First, certain basic principles are outlined--principles which Campbell held to rather consistently throughout his life. These

include: a commitment to the ideal of church-state separation, an understanding of religious freedom as a natural right, a disposition to keep political matters outside the life of the churches, and a public stance of neutrality on party politics and the endorsement of individual candidates. Secondly, the particular positions that Campbell took on a number of key issues relating to church-state concerns are surveyed. These include: slavery, education, the controversy over Roman Catholicism and nativism, moral societies, Sabbath legislation, temperance, war and peace, and capital punishment.

The final chapter is an attempt to trace the sources of Campbell's thought on church and state. It is argued here that Campbell was indeed a product of both Enlightenment and sectarian religious influences. These two streams of thought influenced his thinking in general as well as his understanding of church and state matters in particular.

In the conclusion, it is suggested that Campbell and the American Restoration Movement are examples of a particular kind of reaction to the Enlightenment. While Enlightenment philosophy turned many away from traditional religion and towards deism and skepticism, it also caused others to turn toward a more inward, heart-felt form of spirituality. But Campbell represents a third approach. He sought to combine the rationalism of the Enlightenment with a determination to restore and preserve the essentials of the Christian tradition.